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Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4709th meeting

Tuesday, 18 February 2003, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Pleuger	(Germany)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Tidjani
	Chile	Mr. Valdés
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. De la Sablière
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Letter dated 6 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/153).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-24986 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Letter dated 6 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/153)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, the Gambia, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, the Marshall Islands, Morocco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Peru, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and Yemen, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Nesho (Albania), Mr. Baali (Algeria), Mr. Listre (Argentina), Mr. Dauth (Australia), Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain), Mr. Ivanov (Belarus), Mr. De Moura (Brazil), Mr. Heinbecker (Canada), Mr. Stagno (Costa Rica), Mr. Rodriguez Parilla (Cuba), Mr. Yépez Lasso (Ecuador), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Yauvoli (Fiji), Mr. Grey-Johnson (Gambia), Mr. Adamia (Georgia), Mr. Vassilakis (Greece), Mr. Acosta Bonilla (Honduras), Mr. Kristjansson (Iceland), Mr. Nambiar (India), Mr. Djumala (Indonesia), Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Haraguchi (Japan), Mr. Al-Hussein (Jordan), Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait), Mr. Jegermanis (Latvia), Mr. Diab (Lebanon), Mr. Own (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein), Mr. Zainuddin (Malaysia), Mr. Capelle (Marshall Islands), Mr. Loulichki (Morocco), Mr. Mackay (New Zealand), Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua), Mrs. Yahaya (Nigeria), Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman), Mr. De Rivero (Peru), Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar), Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea), Mr. Huntley (Saint Lucia), Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Tan (Singapore), Mr. Kumalo (South Africa), Mr. Mahendran (Sri Lanka), Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Mr. Stachelin (Switzerland), Mr. Kasemsarn (Thailand), Mr. Kerim (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Mr. Pamir (Turkey), Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates), Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay), Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Mr. Ngo Duc Thang (Viet Nam) and Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, which reads as follows:

> "In accordance with article 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, I have the honour to request the participation of His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, in the discussion of the agenda item under consideration by the Council on Iraq, which will start on 18 February 2003."

That letter will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2003/184.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Yahya Mahmassani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the request contained in the letter dated 6 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa addressed to the President of the Security Council, which was issued as document S/2003/153.

I should also like to draw the attention of members to document S/2003/183, containing the text of a letter dated 14 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I wish to recall that at our meeting last Friday, 14 February, ministers were given seven minutes for their statements. In view of the long list of speakers before us, I would appeal to all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five to seven minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing, and to deliver the condensed versions in this room. There are 61 speakers on my list. If they speak for seven minutes each, that means seven hours of debate, not including all the procedural time we need.

As another measure to optimize the use of our time in order to allow as many delegations as possible to take the floor, I will not individually invite speakers to take seats at the Council table. When a speaker is taking the floor, the Conference Officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table.

I propose that we suspend our meeting tonight at 6.30 p.m. and resume tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. sharp, because otherwise we will not be able to finish our discussion. I would be very grateful if all members of the Council and those speaking in the Council Chamber would cooperate in this for the sake of expediency in the organization of our meeting.

I would like to welcome the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, at this meeting.

The first speaker on my list is the representative of South Africa, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): I should like to congratulate Germany on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. We would also like to thank Security Council members for having scheduled this open debate. Above all, we wish to commend the Security Council for its continued transparency in addressing the situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

Before I begin my statement, I would like, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, to express our condolences to the people of South Korea and the people of the United States with regard to the tragedies that recently befell them.

We, the 115 States Members and 15 observer States of the United Nations that belong to the Non-Aligned Movement, called for this meeting because we believe that the Security Council is engaged in a crucial debate which has important repercussions for the entire international community.

The Non-Aligned Movement has always understood resolution 1441 (2002) to be about achieving verifiable disarmament in Iraq through inspections that would avoid leading us into a situation of war. From the outset, we understood that the inspections were designed as a necessary intrusive instrument to ensure the elimination of proscribed Iraqi programmes. To us, resolution 1441 (2002) was, and still is, about ensuring that Iraq is peacefully disarmed.

Through the adoption of that resolution, the Security Council unanimously decided to establish an enhanced inspection regime with the aim of bringing the disarmament process to full and verified completion. The stated purpose was, in the words of resolution 1441 (2002), "to afford Iraq ... a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations under relevant resolutions of the Council" (*para. 2*).

The Non-Aligned Movement fully supports the intentions of resolution 1441 (2002). Even before the resolution was adopted, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Non-Aligned Movement called on Iraq to abide by all relevant Security Council resolutions. At that time, the Ministers stated:

> "We wish to encourage Iraq and the United Nations to intensify their efforts in search of a lasting, just and comprehensive solution to all outstanding issues between them in accordance

with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions."

The Non-Aligned Movement has noted the offer by several States to strengthen the inspection process. We believe this is in line with resolution 1441 (2002), which, in paragraph 2, mandates "an enhanced inspection regime with the aim of bringing to full and verified completion the disarmament process". The resolution also requests all Member States to give full support to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the discharge of their mandates. In that regard, we are pleased that Iraq has accepted an offer from South Africa of experts who led our country's programme to destroy our nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction and the missiles for the delivery of those weapons. I am also pleased to announce that that team is on its way to Iraq as we speak.

On 14 February 2003, both Mr. Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the IAEA, told the Council that they detected increased and substantive cooperation by the Government of Iraq. They testified that access to inspection sites was prompt and without prior knowledge of the sites that the inspectors visited. Mr. Blix stated that UNMOVIC has so far not found any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. More than 200 chemical, and over 100 biological, samples have been collected at different sites, and the results to date have been consistent with Iraq's declaration. He made the important point that many materials related to Iraq's previous weapons programme remain unaccounted for but that one must not jump to the conclusion that proscribed weapons exist. We call on Iraq to cooperate fully and answer all questions raised by Mr. Blix. We welcome the cooperation Iraq has already given to the inspectors, and we hope that it will continue.

Mr. ElBaradei reported to the Council that since the IAEA had already neutralized Iraq's nuclear weapons programme by December 1998, the focus of its current activities has been on verifying whether Iraq revived its nuclear programme in the intervening years. He informed the Security Council that "We have to date found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in Iraq." (*S/PV.4707, p. 9*) However, the IAEA's investigations are continuing.

The message that has emanated from the 14 February debate in the Security Council is that the inspection process in Iraq is working and that Iraq is showing clear signs of cooperating more proactively with the inspectors. Significantly, the inspectors have also had the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the information that has been provided by several countries. There are still countries that claim to have information on Iraq that could be helpful to the inspectors, and we would urge the Security Council to encourage such countries to share that information with the inspectors as soon as possible. None of the information provided thus far would seem to justify the Council abandoning the inspection process and immediately resorting to the threatened "serious consequences".

The Security Council has yet to fully utilize the inspection mechanisms of resolution 1441 (2002) that would make for more robust and intrusive inspections. As a result, the Council has recently received several offers from Member States that have included the deployment of additional inspectors, surveillance aircraft and mobile customs teams to check for prohibited goods entering Iraq. We would urge the Council to fully explore all those practical options, which may assist in enhancing the success of the inspection process.

Although questions have been raised about how long the inspections should be allowed to continue in Iraq, we recall that there are no time limitations stipulated for inspections in resolution 1441 (2002). As Mr. Blix stated on 14 February, UNMOVIC has been on the ground in Iraq for only 11 weeks, during which the inspectors have been at full operational strength for only two weeks. Mr. Blix stated that the time frame would depend on which task one has in mind: the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and related items and programmes, disarmament, or monitoring to verify that no new proscribed activities occur. Mr. Blix pointed out that monitoring was essential and that it would remain an open-ended and ongoing process until the Council decides otherwise.

We believe that the Security Council must redouble its efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to the situation in Iraq, in line with international law and the provisions of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations is the most authoritative voice in a world of complex multilateralism and interdependence. It is an Organization founded on the need to preserve

international peace and security. We should not allow its legitimacy and credibility to be undermined by this issue.

When the Security Council passes resolutions, those resolutions are binding on all Member States. Security Council resolutions must be enforced without exception. We would hope that a Member State attempting to abide by Security Council resolutions would be encouraged to do so. We believe that resorting to war without fully exhausting all other options represents an admission of failure by the Security Council in carrying out its mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for his kind words addressed to me.

I would like to remind members of the Council and speakers to kindly adhere to the seven minutes allotted. Every additional minute or two adds up to another hour of debate in the Council. In order to give speakers the full use of their seven minutes, I would propose that we consider that the Ambassador of South Africa spoke on everyone's behalf in addressing kind words to me. I would therefore suggest that all other speakers refrain from addressing kind words to me. Other kind words are fully welcome.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express my thanks to you, Mr. President, and to the members of the Security Council for acceding to the request made by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement to convene this open meeting. I also have the pleasure of conveying my gratitude to the delegation of South Africa for having requested the convening of this meeting to hear the views of the Member States of the United Nations as a whole, and of the members of the Movement in particular, within the framework of increased transparency and ideas and views that may contribute to managing and peaceably resolving the current crisis.

The United States of America and Britain are continuing their feverish efforts to launch an aggressive war against my country, which has been the subject of an unjust comprehensive embargo for over 12 years. Their aim is to change the national Government of Iraq and to impose American hegemony over the region and its resources, as a first step towards world domination through the use of force. This is a dangerous precedent in international relations that threatens the credibility of the United Nations and exposes international and regional peace and security to grave dangers.

Iraq's record of compliance with Security Council resolutions is unprecedented in this international Organization and in the history of international relations. During 1991 and 1992, Iraq, along with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), destroyed all the sites, facilities and materials related to its previous programmes of weapons of mass destruction. From 1992 to 1998, Iraq cooperated with UNSCOM and the IAEA to ascertain that Iraq was free of any proscribed programmes. Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, the former Chairman of UNSCOM, stated on 13 January 1993 that Iraq had met 95 per cent of its disarmament obligations. He also repeated that statement in an interview with Swedish radio on 7 September 2002.

When the Security Council decided to conduct a comprehensive review of Iraq's compliance with Council resolutions in order to lift the embargo imposed on it after the Secretary-General's visit to Iraq in 1998, the United States ordered Richard Butler, the former Executive Chairman of UNSCOM, to withdraw the inspectors in preparation for its aggression in December 1998, dubbed "Operation Desert Fox". During that operation, Iraq was bombed by hundreds of missiles that killed thousands of Iraqis, and Iraq's infrastructure was destroyed, having been rebuilt after 1991.

The whole world condemned that act of aggression. The United Nations Secretary-General considered it to be a dark day in United Nations history. I would like to point out here that the United States Government confirmed then, in 1998, that Operation Desert Fox had destroyed all the weapons of mass destruction that Iraq possessed. After the aggression, the Security Council formed a panel headed by Ambassador Amorim. The panel recommended that the remaining disarmament questions could be dealt with in the reinforced ongoing monitoring and verification. Ambassador Amorim based his recommendations on the former UNSCOM report of 1997, which stated that there no longer remained much more unknown about Iraq's remaining military capabilities.

Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) adopted the recommendations of the Amorim panel. Paragraph 2 of the resolution entrusted the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) with the establishment and operation of a reinforced monitoring system that would resolve the remaining disarmament issues. In its planning and organizational structure, UNMOVIC has taken into account the concept of integrating disarmament issues with ongoing monitoring, as described in paragraph 13 of document S/2000/292.

In November of last year, Iraq agreed to the return of the inspectors. The Secretary-General conveyed Iraq's agreement in a letter to the Security Council. The letter included two basic issues. The first considered the return of inspectors as a step towards a comprehensive review of the issue of Iraq, with a view to lifting the embargo imposed on it. The second dealt with the necessity of respecting Iraq's sovereignty and independence. From what we see today, these two issues are still awaiting implementation by the Security Council.

During its three rounds of talks with the Secretary-General last year, Iraq requested that no threats be made to its sovereignty and security. It also requested the initiation of technical talks with Mr. Blix in order to agree on a mechanism to identify the most important remaining issues and ways of solving them. At that time, Mr. Blix said that identifying remaining issues would be decided by the Security Council after the submission of a work programme to the Council two months after the start of work in Iraq. After Iraq agreed to the return of the inspectors and its subsequent agreement to resolution 1441 (2002), Iraq again put the matter before Mr. Blix. However, he repeated that the inspections would have to start first, for two months, and then a work programme would be prepared, followed by consultation with Iraq on the remaining issues.

The United States has exploited this ambiguity to transform the issue from a technical and scientific one into a political one. It requested Iraq to prove that it is free of the alleged weapons of mass destruction, although what was originally requested was active cooperation with the inspectors.

Nevertheless, Iraq has provided all sorts of active and full cooperation, as follows. First, in record time, Iraq submitted a full and comprehensive declaration of its previous programmes of weapons of mass destruction, in addition to submitting new documents covering the period from 1998 to 2002. Secondly, inspectors were granted immediate and unconditional access to all sites they wished to visit, without exempting private homes or the presidential sites, which are a symbol of Iraq's sovereignty. Inspection teams have conducted over 700 inspections to date, covering 400 sites. The cooperation was not limited to opening the doors; it also extended to answering all the questions posed by the inspectors by providing the requested documents, plans and explanations.

Thirdly, Iraq established two specialized commissions to search for documents or materials related to previous proscribed programmes in order to expedite the work of the inspectors. Fourthly, Iraq has allowed inspectors to use helicopters and aerial surveillance in their work, including U-2, Mirage and Antonov planes. The U-2 planes have started their work in the last two days.

Fifthly, Iraq's cooperation is demonstrated by facilitating interviews with scientists and persons the inspectors may wish to see. Those persons were encouraged to accept private interviews with the inspectors, and this is precisely what is taking place now. Sixthly, new methods were suggested to dispel any doubts regarding remaining disarmament issues. Any suggestions submitted by UNMOVIC to solve these issues are welcome. It is only natural that the proposals made by countries will also be equally welcome.

Seventh, Iraq provided inspectors with logistical support to overcome any obstacles that they may encounter in their inspections, and this includes the opening of regional offices for the inspectors throughout Iraq, thus facilitating their use of technical and scientific means for the immediate and effective completion of their task.

We would like to reiterate here — in particular with regard to the controversy surrounding the issue of VX and anthrax, which were unilaterally destroyed by Iraq — that Iraq submitted practical suggestions during the recent technical talks with Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei in Baghdad on 8 and 9 February, with the objective of clearing up what the former Special Commission saw as remaining issues and vague points. This can be done through measuring the dissolved quantities of VX and anthrax in the unilateral

destruction sites, using chemical and physiological analyses. Iraq submitted documents proving the validity of this process, as well as the results it has reached in conducting searches regarding other issues.

This active cooperation resulted in refuting all the allegations emanating from the United States and the United Kingdom. Those allegations started with the statement delivered by the United States President at the General Assembly. This was followed by reports issued by the United States and the United Kingdom Administrations, the last case being the presentation by Mr. Powell before the Security Council on 5 February.

Reason and wisdom make it incumbent upon us to ask if there is any justification for the United States and the United Kingdom to launch war against Iraq under the pretext of their concern about Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction. Even at a time when Iraq is under an ongoing monitoring and verification system, is it to be rewarded with yet another attack by the United States, which is threatening to use weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons?

Through its journey of compliance with the international Organization's resolutions over the last 12 years, Iraq has paid a dear price and has made sacrifices. It has lost close to two million of its people. It is now facing another threat of destruction and killing. Therefore, from this rostrum, we call upon all Member States to shoulder their responsibilities, in particular the member States of the Security Council, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, which emphasizes peaceful solution. We call upon them to put an end to the unjust embargo imposed on Iraq and to eliminate the no-fly zones unilaterally imposed by the United States and the United Kingdom.

We call upon all countries in the world to heed the call of millions of people the world over, who during the last few days rejected the idea of any aggression or threat of war or war against Iraq. These millions of people condemned the troops amassed as a military threat to Iraq and the region and alerted the world community to the dangers of military aggression against Iraq, its people and its territorial integrity. We warn against the serious consequences of a war in a region that has suffered the agony of many wars, a region that is still suffering from the continuation of the policy of occupation and destruction by Israel against the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights. We also demand respect for Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political choice expressed by the Iraqi people during the general popular referendum to reaffirm Iraq's political leader and leadership.

The launching of an attack by the United States and the United Kingdom against Iraq would be proof of the failure of the entire international system. That system must rely on the Charter of the United Nations as its indispensable point of reference for the maintenance of international peace and security. Such an attack would undermine the credibility of the Security Council.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm Iraq's commitment to continuing full and active cooperation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA. In that regard, the two organizations have responded well in implementing Security Council resolutions in a professional and honest manner, in accordance with the Charter and unaffected by political influence and pressure from the United States and the United Kingdom.

We would like to reiterate to the world community that if an aggression against Iraq takes place, Iraq's people, famous for their struggle against the British occupation in the 1920s, will defend their country and will allow no encroachment upon Iraq's sovereignty and independence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are confident that with your expertise and skill you will be able to lead the Council's work successfully at this critical juncture. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Permanent Representative of France, Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, for the valuable efforts he and his delegation made while presiding over the Council last month.

In October of last year, the Security Council held an open meeting to discuss developments in the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations in response to a request by the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. Many members participated, and the views of those members crystallized international opinion, helping the Council to reach agreement, which culminated in the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). The resolution was a

major achievement, through which the Security Council showed its determination to shoulder the responsibility entrusted to it under Article 24 of the Charter: the maintenance of international peace and security. Today's meeting comes in response to a similar request. However, it is being held in more difficult circumstances, due to the Iraqi Government's reluctance to fulfil its commitments under Security Council resolutions 687 (1991), 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002).

It is regrettable that Iraq has continued to defy the will of the international community for so long, not realizing the gravity of its policies and their repercussions for the peace and stability of the entire Gulf region. For more than 20 years, the region has suffered the negative effects of the Iraqi Government's actions and its failure to respond to the resolutions of international legality. After the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002) in November, everyone was optimistic that the beating of the drums of war would be stopped and that the Iraqi Government would come to its senses, realize the gravity of the situation, seize the final opportunity offered by that resolution and cooperate fully with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by declaring its activities in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction and by giving an account of all its proscribed weapons. However, that optimism soon evaporated and was supplanted by concern when Iraq submitted its full, final and complete declaration on 7 December last year. UNMOVIC and the IAEA stated that the declaration was incomplete and contained no important new information. The periodic reports submitted to the Security Council by the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC and the Director General of IAEA, the last of which was delivered last Friday, have concluded that Iraq has not fully cooperated in responding to the requirements of resolution 1441 (2002). That is truly regrettable, especially since such an attitude undermines the chances of peace and increases the possibility of war, which we are all trying to avoid because it would have negative repercussions on the region and its peoples. Kuwait, because of its geographic location, could be more heavily impacted than other countries by developments in Iraq's relations with the United Nations. As part of our contingency planning, Kuwait has recently taken precautionary measures to ensure peace and security for its people.

On many occasions, Kuwait has expressed its views, which are as follows. First, Iraq must fully commit to the complete and faithful implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Secondly, Kuwait supports all efforts made to reach a peaceful solution to the question of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with resolutions of international legality. We urge the Iraqi Government to respond fully to regional and international appeals and resolutions calling on Iraq to comply with their provisions in order to avoid war.

Thirdly, Kuwait pays tribute to the UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors for their impartiality, professionalism and objectivity. It appreciates the great efforts that all are making to fulfil UNMOVIC's mandate.

Fourthly, Kuwait hopes that the use of military force will be a last resort and will take place under international legality. We believe that the Iraqi Government alone can spare the brotherly Iraqi people and the other peoples of the region the negative repercussions and dangers of military action by modifying its conduct as soon as possible and by cooperating with the inspectors on substance rather than merely on process.

Fifthly, we reaffirm the need to maintain the unity of the Security Council because that is an important element in ensuring commitment to the resolutions adopted by the Council. Previous Council experience in the handling of the question of Iraq has proven that a common stance and unified will are more effective in realizing our desired objectives.

The Security Council has been intensively and repeatedly seized of the question of the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The issue is very important because it affects international peace and security. However, it is not the only commitment included in relevant Security Council resolutions. The resolutions contain other important commitments directly affecting Kuwait that have not yet been settled. The most important of these issues are missing persons and prisoners of Kuwaiti and other nationalities, and that of Kuwaiti property seized during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. It is regrettable that the methods employed by the Iraqi Government with respect to the inspection teams tasked with the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction since 1991 are the same methods Iraq uses in addressing the situation of

prisoners, missing persons and Kuwaiti property, despite that issue's humanitarian aspect. This proves that Iraq's procrastination and evasion of commitments are an entrenched approach for the Iraqi authorities.

With respect to the Kuwaiti and other prisoners and missing persons, no progress has been made in resolving this humanitarian question. Those people have been missing for more than 12 years. Iraq sometimes boycotts the work of the Tripartite Commission and the Technical Subcommittee chaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross, and sometimes it resumes its participation with one or the other body for purely political reasons. For more than three years, Iraq refused to cooperate with the High-Level Coordinator, Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov, appointed by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1284 (1999). Iraq recently agreed to invite the High-Level Coordinator to Iraq. That visit took place in January. However, no tangible progress was made.

Cooperation on procedure is the main characteristic of how Iraq has handled the humanitarian situation for all these years in total violation of Security Council resolutions 686 (1991), 687 (1991) and 1284 (1999). Therefore, we hope that the Security Council will continue to pressure the Iraqi Government to meet the demands of the resolutions of international legality. We are not content with presidential statements intended purely for the press.

As concerns the issue of the property usurped by Iraq during its occupation of Kuwait, the way that Iraq has addressed this question is not different from the way in which it has dealt with other issues. Procedural and nominal cooperation is the main characteristic of Iraqi conduct. Iraq claimed that it did not have any Kuwaiti property, and documented those claims in a letter it addressed to the Secretary-General in 1994. Later, however, it admitted that it still had some Kuwaiti governmental and institutional documents and property. Iraq even claimed that these documents represented the notional archives of Kuwait. Then, when those documents were returned, under the auspices of the United Nations and in the presence of the League of Arab States, and when we studied them to determine which properties had been returned, we found that these were simply correspondence between different organs of the State apparatus and that they could not be the official archives of Kuwait.

We therefore sent a letter to the Secretary-General in order to place on record our position. That document was issued under the symbol S/2002/1412 on 24 December 2002. Iraq's failure to cooperate in returning the national archives of Kuwait and other property is a cause for concern. The letter from the Iraqi President addressed to the Kuwaiti people on 7 December of last year confirmed our doubts and the fact that Iraq does not intend to respect its Arab and international commitments or the sovereignty and independence of Kuwait.

Kuwait submitted a letter to the Council with information on the subject, contained in document S/2002/1350, dated 11 December 2002.

In conclusion, the Security Council, as the principal organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, is facing a grave challenge: to bring about the implementation of its many resolutions with regard to the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. The Council has the responsibility of preserving its authority, credibility and legitimacy before the international community. We hope that the Council will present a unified will and take the same position that it has in the context of previous international crises, in a manner that enhances the role of the United Nations and promotes the realization of the purposes and principles of the Charter.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Morocco, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) *(spoke in Arabic)*: First of all, on behalf of my delegation, I should like to thank the delegation of South Africa for the initiative, taken on behalf of the non-aligned States, to hold this public meeting on the question of Iraq.

In accordance with your recommendation, Sir, I shall limit myself to associating myself with the gratitude expressed and the compliments paid by Ambassador Kumalo to your predecessor, Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sablière.

We followed with interest the presentation of the reports by Mr. Hans Blix, the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We have taken due note of the progress that has been achieved in the inspections. Together with the members of the Security Council, we have taken note

also of the measures undertaken by the Iraqi authorities to implement the provisions of resolution 1441 (2002). Mr. Blix's statement contained encouraging indications regarding the desired results through the continued work of the inspectors in a serious manner and in a favourable climate.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which desires to see peace prevail in the region and this crisis overcome by peaceful means in order to avert more tragedies in the region, believes that the progress achieved is encouraging. The Kingdom of Morocco urges Iraq to demonstrate continued constructive cooperation with the United Nations inspectors in implementation of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).

To achieve the desired goal, efforts must continue. A favourable climate must prevail and sufficient and necessary means must be provided to facilitate the work of the inspectors and enable them to discharge their duties with the greatest possible efficiency.

The Middle East region cannot tolerate fresh agonies or the ravages of a new war. Indeed, it badly needs to see hotbeds of tension extinguished and peace and security reign throughout the region.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which has always made the settlement of disputes through peaceful means a basic principle underlying its regional and international relations, sincerely hopes that this meeting will result in the elaboration of an approach that will spare the brotherly Iraq people suffering and the ravages of war and preserve its national unity and territorial integrity within the framework of international legality.

All of this will serve to strengthen the credibility of the Security Council as the organ entrusted with the maintenance of collective security and will allow it to achieve the lofty and ultimate objective for which the United Nations was created: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Cuba, on whom I now call.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The impressive anti-war demonstrations that took place all around the world on Saturday, 15 February; the opinion polls; the productive and substantial ministerial debate held on 14 February in the Council; the prudence and objectivity of the presentations given by the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); and the almost unanimous support for the courageous, measured and constructive statement of the French Foreign Minister, all of these express a powerful consensus: peace must be preserved as the ideal and the very reason for the existence of the United Nations and in order to ensure that it can exercise its inalienable and exclusive rights and duties under the Charter.

A blue canvas over Picasso's "Guernica" cannot disguise the fact that it is a warning to the Security Council — a warning that cannot be ignored — concerning the exceptional nature of the prerogative of the use of force, exercised on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations and for which history will demand accountability. Nor does it diminish our memory of the horrors that gave rise to the United Nations.

Only 72 hours ago, President Fidel Castro stated:

> "These are not days of hope and glory for peace in the world. A war is on the verge of breaking out. This would not be a confrontation between comparable forces. On the one side would be a hegemonistic super-Power, with all of its overwhelming military might and technology, backed by a main ally, another country with nuclear capability and a member of the United Nations Security Council. On the other side would be a country whose people have suffered more than 10 years of daily bombings and the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, mainly those of children, through hunger and disease, following an unequal war provoked by Iraq's illegal occupation of Kuwait, which was an independent State recognized by the international community. The vast majority of world public opinion is unanimously opposed to a new war. Above all, it does not accept the adoption of a unilateral decision by the United States Government, in complete disregard for international rules and for the power and authority of the United Nations, limited as they already are. This is an unnecessary war, on pretexts that are neither credible nor proven.

> "Completely debilitated by the last war against the United States in 1991, Iraq ... utterly lacks the capacity to counteract the offensive and defensive weaponry at the disposal of the United States, which is fully capable of annihilating any threat."

We have the absolute conviction that there is not the slightest risk for that country or for its friends in the region, and that it would be an unnecessary war.

The consequences of an unnecessary and unjustified military action in Iraq would be extremely grave. As has been foreseen, the humanitarian catastrophe could be massive and terrible. The deaths and destruction would be unpredictable. No one could calculate its duration. The economic and political effects on a world in recession would be enormous, especially in developing countries, which are already paying unsustainable increases in oil prices that are disastrous for their economies and that, with the launching of the first missile, would rise to even more exorbitant levels.

Unquestionably, Iraq has cooperated with the inspectors and has confirmed its resolve to complete its compliance with all relevant Security Council resolutions, in order to eliminate any doubt with respect to the possibility that it still possesses weapons of mass destruction. Recently, it accepted additional inspection components and adopted new legislative and executive measures; this has been favourably received by the international community, with the sole exception of those who appear to have made up their minds in advance to carry out military action at any cost and with economic objectives based on control of energy resources and on domestic policy concerns.

The resolutions must be implemented in good faith by all parties in order to move forward towards a comprehensive solution to the question of Iraq that guarantees peace and stability in the region and includes the lifting of the sanctions regime, which is causing so much suffering for the Iraqi people. The sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Iraq, of Kuwait and of all the other countries in the region must be respected. The Non-Aligned Movement Summit Countries will surely make a decisive contribution to peace.

Cuba defends international law, because we consider it to be the only viable guarantee of international peace and security. We believe that the world should be regulated by a system of collective security, based on cooperation, that provides guarantees for all. Such a system cannot be replaced by "the law of the jungle" for the benefit of the powerful and, ultimately, of the only super-Power. The unipolar, unsustainable, unjust and profoundly inequitable international order cannot be succeeded by an even more primitive, unstable, unpredictable and dangerous one.

The new doctrine of pre-emptive attack that some seek to impose advocates the right to use or threaten to use force in international relations and the right to take unilateral military action against other States, in advance and in the face of indeterminate and vague threats. That is a flagrant violation of the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations and seeks to turn the inherent right of legitimate self-defence into a blank check.

It is very dangerous to attempt to resolve national security concerns through unilateral action or unfounded accusations rather than through cooperation among States parties to treaties and through the use of the procedures defined in them for that purpose.

Cuba, which for four decades has been a victim of the nuclear super-Power's aggression and hostility and which has never developed, and has the firm resolve never to develop, weapons of mass destruction — whether nuclear or of any other kind — reaffirms that general and complete disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, is the only possible path to peace. We reaffirm that the use of such weapons under any circumstances, the further development of such arsenals, their proliferation or the attempt to secure such capabilities would be madness, with unpredictable consequences.

Apparently, the United States is now promoting a draft resolution in the Security Council designed to make a war against Iraq inevitable. It would follow up on elements of resolution 1441 (2002) related to the supposed ceasefire of 1991 — the concepts of "material breach" and "serious consequences" — which, as we warned at the time, were intended to support the interpretation of the hawks that the resolution authorizes the use of force in the event of alleged Iraqi non-compliance. The facts have increasingly confirmed the rightness of our warnings.

Despite the building of opposition to war around the world and within the United States and the United Kingdom, the risk of unilateral attack is growing. Cuba strongly hopes that, among the members of the Security Council, adherence to their countries' legitimate national interests and to fundamentally democratic respect for the will of their peoples will prevail.

The Security Council, so often held hostage to the anti-democratic and arbitrary exercise of the veto, now has an opportunity to restore, to a degree, its diminished credibility by building a solid and insurmountable majority in defence of peace. In that event, it would act with broad international backing and with the support of public opinion. Moreover, the United Nations could rely on the enormous political, moral and legal force of the General Assembly.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): I should like to join previous speakers in briefly expressing our felicitations to you, Mr. President, and to your French predecessor, as well as our appreciation to Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei.

My country, as one of Iraq's neighbours, is following attentively the situation concerning Iraq and its disarmament obligations under Security Council resolutions. On the one hand, we directly experienced the horror of becoming the victim of all-out aggression and of the massive use of chemical weapons in the 1980s. Today, 15 years after the end of the war, the wounds are yet to be healed. Tens of thousands of the chemically wounded civilians and soldiers who survived the horror continue to live agonizing and excruciating lives, and hardly a week goes by without one or several of them dying as a result. Therefore, we have an unparalleled interest in ensuring that there will never again be an aggression in our neighbourhood and that weapons of mass destruction will never again be used there.

On the other hand, the prospect of another destabilizing war in our immediate vicinity is a nightmarish scenario of death and destruction. The Iranian people and Government are concerned first and foremost about the humanitarian catastrophe that would undoubtedly befall the Iraqi people in the event of a war — let alone the influx of displaced persons and refugees.

The extent of destabilization in the region and of uncertainty in Iraq in the event of a war might go far beyond anything we can imagine today. Given the state of Iraqi society and of the whole region, there are many wild cards that no one can fit into his calculations with any degree of certainty. But one outcome is almost certain: extremism stands to benefit enormously from an ill-calculated adventure in Iraq. The prospect of appointing a foreign military commander to run an Islamic and Arab country is all the more destabilizing and only indicates prevailing delusions.

Bearing all that in mind, every effort should be made to fulfil the international community's unanimous demand for the disarmament of Iraq without recourse to armed force. Under the current circumstances, and with a devastating war in the offing, it is all the more incumbent upon the Iraqi leadership to cooperate fully and proactively with the weapons inspectors, especially on substance, as the inspectors have repeatedly called for. Iraq's other obligations — including that it release prisoners of war and cease harbouring terrorists on its soil — have yet to be fully carried out.

Likewise, we do not see any reason for the rush-to-war rhetoric. We agree that resolution 1441 (2002) is about disarmament and not about inspections. But we believe that, while the chief inspectors are signalling their intention to continue to work, there is no ground for aborting the process and embarking on military action, with all its known and unknown devastating consequences. We further believe that the strengthening of the inspection regime by providing it with additional inspectors and equipment cannot be readily discarded by a rush to war. We therefore express our full support for the efforts of members of this Council and the proposal of France to strengthen the inspection system.

We are increasingly hearing that the United Nations should show backbone and courage or become an irrelevant talking society. While we fully agree with the need for the effectiveness of the United Nations as the sole universal Organization, we cannot accept that the priorities of one Power should provide the criteria for the effectiveness or relevance of the United Nations. We need not recall that dozens of Security Council resolutions explicitly demanding an end to Israeli occupation of Arab lands have been dead letter

not for weeks or years, but for decades; nor do we need to name the only major Power that has enabled Israel to contemptuously flout the will of the international community.

The same dubious track record applies to weapons of mass destruction. The international regime governing the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction has enormously suffered from the application of self-serving and arbitrary criteria, condoning and even encouraging friends of the day on the path of acquiring such weapons. The provision of chemical precursors and biological agents to Iraq in the 1980s, which is widely documented and lies at the origin of the current crisis, is a brazen example in this respect. Condoning Israel's nuclear arsenal and precluding the realization of the repeated demands of the General Assembly and even of this Council to establish a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is another illustrative case.

Against this backdrop, it is difficult to accept such arguments about the effectiveness of the United Nations or the repeated claims to moral clarity.

We believe that what is at stake today goes far beyond the mere disarmament of Iraq. The rush-to-war rhetoric is not coming out of a vacuum; neither is the anxiety expressed by the international community hyperbole. We are approaching the peak of a trend, which includes pre-emptive strikes and the use of tactical nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States.

What we witnessed last Friday here in this Chamber and, more importantly, what followed the day after across the globe were clear expressions of concern and alarm over a trend which, willingly or otherwise, is undermining not only the international consensus to eradicate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, but in fact the very institution and norms that have been instrumental in forging that consensus and in maintaining international peace and security in general.

In closing, let me stress that the current and historically non-permanent power imbalance and patterns of friendship should not induce anybody to indulge themselves in undermining the credibility and authority of the Security Council. It is imperative that the Security Council, as the legally competent forum entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, remain the centre of decision-making on how to deal with the Iraqi issue, and all members of the international community should genuinely abide by its decision.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Algeria, on whom I now call.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset, Sir, very briefly to congratulate you and your predecessor, Ambassador Jean-Marc De La Sablière. I also wish to thank you for having granted the request of the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement to convene this open debate on an issue that has continued to be central to the concerns of the entire membership of the international community ever since the debate we held in October 2002.

Like the rest of the international community, Algeria has followed with keen concern the events that have taken place since then and therefore cannot fail to be anxious regarding the serious dangers now threatening regional and international peace and security.

It is nevertheless appropriate to stress here that, since Iraq's acceptance on 16 September of the unconditional return to its territory of the United Nations inspectors, followed in November by its unconditional acceptance of resolution 1441 (2002), never in more than a decade have there been conditions so conducive to a political and diplomatic settlement of what is called the Iraqi crisis or have the prospects for a peaceful disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction been so near at hand.

We owe these positive developments, in contrast to the period of defiance that characterized the relationship between Iraq and the United Nations, in particular over the past four years, first and foremost to the determination of the international community to see its decisions implemented and to the outstanding unity demonstrated by the Security Council, which is the international community's embodiment, during the process that concluded on 8 November 2002 with the unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 (2002).

However, it is equally correct to say that we owe these positive developments to Iraq, which, in demonstrating realism, wisdom and responsibility in its relationship with the United Nations, has been able to work in sync with the peaceful aspirations of the international community and, in particular, with the efforts to that end made by the Secretary-General and

by the leaders of the countries members of the League of Arab States.

Ever since the resumption of inspections in Iraq on 26 November 2002, the international community has been able to measure progress achieved towards a peaceful settlement of the thorny issue of the disarmament of Iraq with respect to weapons of mass destruction. Resolution 1441 (2002), in creating a strengthened inspections regime, provided the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with the means to carry out their missions. During each of the stages provided for in the adopted timetable, the effectiveness of the established system has proved itself.

The interim reports made to the Security Council by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei on 27 January 2003 clearly highlighted the cooperation of the Iraqi authorities with regard to the freedom of movement and action of the inspection teams, which, it should be recalled, is one of the strongest demands laid down in resolution 1441 (2002). Those reports also had the merit of placing these facts once again into context by establishing that the disarmament of Iraq with respect to weapons of mass destruction had been achieved to a substantive, indeed decisive degree under the old inspections regime established under earlier Council resolutions that form an integral part of resolution 1441 (2002).

The period between 1998 and 2002, when the inspections were interrupted, was clearly of a nature to give rise to questions as to the fate of the stocks of weapons of mass destruction that were not destroyed or to the potential resumption of the production of prohibited weapons. The heads of the inspections teams, however, objectively and solemnly raised these legitimate issues on 27 January.

We believe that it is vital, however, to ensure that the dynamic set in motion by the resumption of inspections should contribute daily to a shrinking of the remaining grey areas regarding the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and to bringing us closer to a comprehensive implementation of resolution 1441 (2002), which is the surest way to stave off the prospect of the use of force.

Thus, Member States have been able to take advantage of the resources provided by resolution 1441 (2002), paragraph 10 in particular, by providing UNMOVIC and IAEA, in addition to sophisticated material means, with a significant amount of the information available to them, such as in the presentation made to the Council by Mr. Colin Powell on 5 February, which highlighted the full importance and relevance of strengthening the inspections and the need for Iraq to cooperate fully and promptly with UNMOVIC and IAEA to achieve peaceful disarmament.

The momentum of the inspections has clearly been increased, as the presentation of the 14 February reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei before the Security Council attests. The reports emphasized significant progress and greater cooperation by Iraq with the United Nations on substantive issues, strengthened by the Iraq's adoption of legislation prohibiting the production of weapons of mass destruction, which shows that the country has committed itself to abide by international legality. That being the case, any proposal aimed at improving the effectiveness of the inspections and allowing the inspectors to discharge the duties entrusted to them must be a subject of attention from the Council.

Despite these positive events, the threat of armed conflict continues, unfortunately, to loom over the region and give rise to the gravest of fears regarding the extremely serious consequences that such a conflict would bring about in Iraq itself and in other countries of the region.

Algeria, for its part, notes with hope that since the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002) nothing has happened that is liable to justify the implementation of the paragraphs that open the way to the use of force. A military operation against Iraq would have a disastrous impact on the Iraqi people — who for 12 years have been subjected to sanctions, which are in many respects inhumane — and on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, to which the Security Council has reaffirmed its dedication in resolution 1441 (2002). It would also have serious consequences for the peace process in the Middle East, which is already moribund, as well as for the Israeli-Arab conflict as such.

From that point of view, the international community expects that the Security Council will maintain its authority and credibility, and that of the United Nations, by knowing first of all how to find the resources within the Organization that enable it to remain in control of the process of a peaceful and

political settlement of the Iraqi crisis, through unity of all its members. It can then work to strengthen the authority and credibility that has been undermined by Israeli intransigence by shouldering its responsibilities, all its responsibilities, towards the Palestinian people and by demonstrating equal determination and firmness regarding all of those who are trampling under foot its resolutions and by rejecting them.

It is extremely important here to emphasize that the decision taken by the international community to make the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, contained in paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), must not be limited to Iraq. It is equally applicable to Israel, which has arrogated to itself the right to be the sole nuclear power in the region in defiance of international legality.

The future of the system of collective security, carefully crafted, depends on equal treatment afforded all the members of the international community, which for us, nations large and small, constitutes the guarantee that the law will prevail in any and all circumstances.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for this month. I have full confidence in your ability to lead the Council successfully thanks to your experience and wisdom. We would also like to congratulate your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of France, for so ably presiding over the Council last month. We would also like to thank the Council for convening this open meeting to express the concerns of Member States at the United Nations.

We are meeting today to discuss the situation of Iraq amidst difficult circumstances. We welcome the reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, which we heard on Friday. The reports included many positive points with regard to the disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and stressed the importance of continuing the inspections, which will reduce the possibility of war and its ravages. We would like to thank Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for their great efforts to bring to a close this complex case.

The Arab Summit in Beirut last March stressed the importance and necessity of safeguarding peace and stability in the Gulf region. It also stressed the importance of creating positive conditions conducive to the development of normal relations among the countries of the region. In this context, we stress the importance of Iraq's implementation of Security Council resolutions relevant to the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, particularly the question of Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons from third countries, as well as its cooperation with the United Nations to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The United Nations expressed its grave concern over war and its negative impact and repercussions on Iraq, which would lead to untold suffering. We cannot, therefore, ignore the humanitarian aspect of the situation in Iraq. When all is said and done, those who will suffer are the Iraqis, who have been suffering, actually, for more than 10 years. We should work to alleviate their suffering and assist them in resolving this predicament. The Iraqi people have suffered the scourge of many wars during the last decade. International sanctions have exacerbated their suffering.

We should stress here that it is Israel, the party that owns a destructive and lethal nuclear arsenal, that should be held accountable by the international community. The international community has ignored the crimes perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people, thereby fuelling and increasing the cycle of violence in the region, all as a result of the policies pursued by the current Israeli Government, which continues to occupy Arab territories and to commit war crimes.

We therefore call for the enforcement of paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991), which calls for the declaration of the Middle East a region free from weapons of mass destruction. The international community must play the role entrusted to it by the Charter, without any selectivity or double standards.

We have been following the inspections operations in Iraq. It has become clear to us that the tasks undertaken by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have yielded positive results. What is required now is to allow the inspections more time to complete such tasks.

The Iraqi Government should cooperate more actively to bring this enduring case to a close. We believe that Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), unanimously adopted, provides for a framework that has not been fully used yet. As Members of this international Organization, which was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, we should commit ourselves to the implementation of international law and the enhancement of human rights. We should also spare no effort to peacefully settle any crisis that we face, so that we can maintain the foundations of international peace and security.

Continued inspections in Iraq, with more time for the inspectors to implement their mandate, will assist in disarming Iraq, which is the objective that, collectively, we are seeking. The disarmament of Iraq by peaceful means is our objective. There is an alternative to war; military force should be a last resort. The Security Council, which is entrusted with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should spare no effort to use every means at its disposal peacefully to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. Iraq should cooperate more actively with the international community and should implement all relevant Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, we would welcome any initiatives or ideas calling for the peaceful resolution of this question and stressing the need to preserve the unity, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. We hope that the efforts of the Council and other international efforts will be successful in finding a solution to the current crisis.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Jordan, on whom I now call.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Our Organization was established after the Second World War in an endeavour to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war through the maintenance of justice, respect for international law and the promotion of basic human rights. As such, the United Nations took it upon itself to maintain international peace and security through collective measures to remove the causes of war and threats to peace and to bring about, by peaceful means when possible, and in accordance with the principles of justice and international law, the settlement of international disputes that could lead to a breach of the peace.

Given the current situation, which threatens to exhaust peaceful means in dealing with the Iraqi issue, the Jordanian Government believes that all States Members of the United Nations should work together to achieve a solution through all available peaceful means, and to avoid any measures that would breach the peace and further exacerbate the situation in the Middle East.

That in itself makes it incumbent on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities under the Charter, in particular paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 24. The rest of the membership of the Organization has entrusted the Security Council with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and the Council must therefore use all possible reasonable means to resolve the Iraqi issue through negotiation and dialogue. In that connection, I would like to reiterate the position of the Jordanian Government that the implementation of Security Council resolutions — all resolutions on the Middle East, whether on Iraq or on the occupied Palestinian territories — is an obligation on all States without exception.

The Jordanian Government believes that a peaceful way out of the current crisis would require that Iraq fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, including those related to inspections, in particular resolutions 687 (1991), 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002). Resolution 687 (1991) created the framework for and set out the goals of the inspection process in Iraq; resolution 1284 (1999) clarified, inter alia, the obligations of both Iraq and the inspectors in relation to resolving the remaining disarmament issues and to the creation of a reinforced system of ongoing monitoring and verification; and resolution 1441 (2002) provided the inspectors with significant rights and the authority to build a robust, enhanced and effective inspection system. Such a system would put an end to Iraq's proscribed weapons programmes in a peaceful manner, provided that suitable conditions for the process existed. To date, this system has shown evidence of unprecedented effectiveness. It should continue and, if necessary, be enhanced, as its failure would constitute a threat to international peace and security. The Security Council would then have to convene to consider that failure, as well as how to restore international peace and security.

In this regard, the Government of Jordan would like to reiterate that the Security Council resolutions relevant to Iraq complement one another. It further expresses its support for the continuation of the inspection process and for the work being carried out by Mr. Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Government of Jordan also calls for improved cooperation on the part of all relevant parties, especially the Iraqi Government, to ensure that Iraq's proscribed weapons programmes are brought to an end in a peaceful manner. In this regard, it welcomes the outcome of the recent talks that took place in Baghdad, including unconditional permission for surveillance flights and the conducting of private interviews with Iraqi scientists, as well as a commitment by Iraq to enact, without conditions, legislation prohibiting the manufacture and stockpiling of proscribed weapons.

Jordan calls on the Iraqi Government not to waste this opportunity and to take the initiative by cooperating proactively in the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions. That would save Iraq, the region and its peoples from the scourge of war and from the suffering that would inevitably follow. The Government of Jordan hopes that that would be the right step towards a comprehensive solution encompassing the implementation of all relevant Council resolutions, including those related to Kuwaiti and third-party prisoners of war and missing persons. That in turn would lead to an end to the long-drawn-out suffering of the Iraqi people, allowing them to live in prosperity and dignity, and would ensure that future generations of Iraqis can live in peace and security.

The wars that plagued the Middle East region in the previous century were, and still are, the major cause of political, economic and social instability in that region. This in turn has had negative repercussions on international peace and security and has contributed to the creation of a major global economic crisis. Any new war would therefore have serious repercussions, not only on the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, but on the whole region. Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis that would inevitably result from such a war — the deaths, the injuries, the refugee movement and the displacement of millions. Jordan, as one of Iraq's neighbours, would like to recall the serious humanitarian and economic consequences that continue to affect it as a result of the first Gulf war.

For those reasons, the Government of Jordan calls on the Security Council and on all parties directly involved in the crisis to make use of every available solution to avoid war; to contribute to the stability and security of the Middle East; to respect the rights of the countries of the region and their peoples; to abide by the provisions of the Charter; and to act within the framework of internationai legitimacy and the Security Council.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of The Gambia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Grey-Johnson (Gambia): My delegation is speaking in its capacity as Chairman of the Group of African States.

At the outset, let me commend you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting at the request of the Non-Aligned Movement, which constitutes a sizeable chunk of the membership of the United Nations. As you are aware, the member States of the African Union together make up a significant bloc in the Non-Aligned Movement. It stands to reason that the position of the African Union on issues such as the one we are at present considering would be prominently reflected in the concerns of the Non-Aligned Movement on those issues. It is therefore our hope that those concerns will inform the decisions that the Council will, from our debate today, ultimately make on the burning question of Iraq.

The subject of today's meeting has engaged the whole world for a very long time now, and all peace-loving nations sincerely wish that it may be speedily brought to closure, peacefully and for the greater good of all. In striving towards that objective, the entire international community has a responsibility to ensure that the process is managed in such a way that does not unleash negative and destabilizing effects on our security, our economies, our societies and our political systems.

Experience has taught us in Africa that when elephants fight it is we, the grass, who suffer. We are fully aware that just as we bore the full brunt of the conflagrations of the cold war, so also do we now stand to suffer if the impending conflict is not averted through proper management and a peaceful resolution. Already, it is on our soil and among our innocent

people that terrorism has reared a good part of its ugly head. We cannot forget the terrorist attacks in Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Mombasa that caused huge loss of life and extensive destruction to property. We shall surely be even more exposed if mismanagement of the Iraq issue leads to the provocation of terrorist attacks on member States. Our nations do not have the sophisticated security, detection and early-warning capacities that aid preventive actions in developed countries. Our systems are not so highly developed as to be able to easily anticipate and ward off terrorist attacks, nor is it so easy for us to quickly recover from such attacks.

It is to be expected that recourse to war as a means of resolving the crisis will also naturally have a negative impact on the already weak economies of our countries, at a time when we can ill afford or sustain such an unwelcome outcome. The African economy is already showing signs of stress as a result of the uncertainties surrounding this looming conflict. War will certainly further frustrate the efforts being made by African Governments to tackle poverty and prevent conflict on the continent.

The sparring that has been going on between the opposing forces on the subject of our debate is leading many to believe that the prophetic clash of civilizations is already upon us. In many parts of the Muslim world ordinary people believe that a war on Iraq is a war on Islam. Erroneous as that perception may be, it does not give much comfort in many quarters. Africa has one of the largest concentrations of Muslims in the world. In the Sahel alone there are more than 100 million Muslims. For those large numbers of Muslims in our communities to be made to feel that they are being singled out for attack by the international community, of which we are all a part, is an eventuality that all African Governments earnestly wish to pre-empt.

Africa does not want war. In the declaration of the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of the African Union on the Iraqi crisis, which was made at Addis Ababa on 3 February 2003, African Governments stated that

> "military confrontation in Iraq would be a destabilizing factor for the whole region and would have far-reaching economic and security consequences for all the countries of the world, and particularly for those of Africa".

Further, the Central Organ declared that

> "the territorial integrity of Iraq should be respected and ... all diplomatic means should be pursued by international community to ensure that the Iraqi Government complies fully with the provisions of resolution 1441 and that, in any case, any new decision on the matter should emanate from the UN Security Council after a consideration of the final report of the inspection team".

The position taken by African Governments on the issue is clear and is fully consistent with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, Article 51 of which permits the use of force only "if an armed attack occurs", and even then, only "until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security". We are satisfied that the Council has taken those measures in authorizing, and continuing with, the inspections in Iraq.

Just a few days ago the Council received reports from Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei on the work of the inspectors in Iraq. Most members of the Council agreed that the Iraqi authorities were beginning to cooperate and that progress was being made. Such a development encourages us all to expect that, through the work of the inspectors, Iraq will be made to disarm itself of all weapons of mass destruction without having to suffer the pains of war.

My delegation strongly urges the Iraqi authorities to cooperate fully and unconditionally with the Security Council and to comply with all the requirements put before it, not only in resolution 1441 (2002) but also in all the other resolutions that relate to the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. In particular, we call upon them once again to release the several hundred Kuwaiti prisoners of war they are holding and to return the Kuwaiti archives to where they rightfully belong, that is, in Kuwait.

The voices that have appealed for patience and for the inspections not to be interrupted or rushed are many. We urge the Council to listen to those voices and to pay heed to their most reasonable appeal.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): I did have a whole lot of nice things to say about you at the start of my address, Mr. President, but, following your instructions, I have

withdrawn them. That is not to say that I do not mean them.

We all know that on 8 November 2002 the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 (2002), affording Iraq a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations. That resolution came 11 years and seven months after resolution 687 (1991) demanded that Iraq give up its weapons of mass destruction. Given the amount of time that has passed, we had hoped that resolution 1441 (2002) would have been be the final step in resolving this issue. Given its unanimous adoption by the Council, we had hoped that the Government of Iraq would finally get the message. But, sadly, 11 years and 10 months after the Security Council first demanded that Iraq disarm, Saddam Hussain still has not understood the message.

Resolution 1441 (2002) set up two objective criteria of compliance: the provision by Iraq of a full and complete declaration of its programmes of weapons of mass destruction, and unconditional cooperation with weapons inspectors. More than three months later, by any objective reading of those criteria, Iraq has failed to meet its obligations.

On 7 December Iraq delivered a declaration that was patently incomplete. As the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) noted, it provided no new information and failed to answer serious outstanding questions, including questions about the production of anthrax, VX and mustard gas.

On 27 January, after some 60 days of inspections, neither UNMOVIC nor the IAEA were able to say that Iraq was actively cooperating. Serious questions about VX and about thousands of litres of chemical and biological agents remained unanswered.

On 5 February Secretary of State Powell presented further evidence that Iraq was not cooperating, indeed, that it was actively trying to subvert the inspection process. Australia found the intelligence presented by Secretary Powell compelling. If some believe that that information was open to interpretation, that is of course their right. But given Saddam's record of deception, I am not sure why we should be giving him the benefit of the doubt.

And on 14 February, after almost 80 days of inspections, UNMOVIC and the IAEA again reported to the Council. What did we hear? We heard that Iraq had been working to extend the range of its missile systems beyond prescribed limits. And what did we not hear? We did not hear that Iraq had finally decided to cooperate immediately, actively and unconditionally with inspectors.

It is patently clear, by the criteria established under resolution 1441 (2002), that Iraq is in further material breach of its obligations. The question today is what the Security Council, as the primary multilateral instrument of international peace and security, is going to do about it. Last year the Council spent eight weeks putting in place a robust inspection regime. Resolution 1441 (2002) gave inspectors the tools they needed to verify Iraqi disarmament — and it is verifying Iraqi disarmament which is their job, not a game of catch as catch can.

But that was only one part of the solution to this problem. Active Iraqi cooperation remains the other, more fundamental, part. And this is still missing. In the examples I have already listed — in everything we heard from Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei — the one thing missing was immediate, active and unconditional cooperation, as demanded by resolution 1441 (2002). All of us understand the importance of this. I have heard no one here say that doubling the number of inspectors or giving them more time and more resources will work without Iraqi cooperation. This is what the Council should be focusing on today.

Yes, the Council could give Iraq more time. Yes, we could wait until March; we could wait another three months. But do we really think more time will make Iraq cooperate? Does Iraq really need three more months to make a decision that it should take in no more than three minutes?

In Australia's view, the Security Council cannot wait forever to confront this issue. Either Iraq has complied or it has not. In our view, the Council should move quickly to consider a further resolution that deals decisively with Iraq's failure to comply with resolution 1441 (2002). The Security Council has a fundamental responsibility to assert its authority. If it does not, it places in jeopardy not only the cause of Iraqi disarmament, but also the very basis of our current system of collective security.

Resolution 1441 (2002) gave Iraq a final opportunity to meet its obligations and promised serious consequences if it did not comply. Is the

Security Council now saying that Iraq should be given yet more opportunities and can forget about the serious consequences? What message does that send to other States prepared to thumb their noses at international law and international norms?

Delays and divisions in the Council will only play into Iraq's hands. We cannot allow a tyrant to evade Council decisions. The Security Council must stand united around what is fundamental, and must not be distracted. It must act decisively to ensure that, after 12 years, Iraq finally meets its obligations.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Turkey. I give him the floor.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): Ever since the question of Iraq entered its present phase, Turkey has been unequivocal in its commitment to the principles that continue to govern its 80-year-old relationship with its southern neighbour. Likewise, Turkey has actively supported the wide-ranging quest for a peaceful solution of the Iraqi crisis, and we have been at the forefront of the regional initiatives in that vein. More recently,. the Istanbul Declaration, carrying the signatures of the regional countries, called on the Iraqi leadership to move irreversibly and sincerely towards assuming its responsibilities in restoring peace and stability in the region.

At about the same time, my Government let the Iraqi authorities at all levels know directly of our dire assessment of the unfolding events. We told them that Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) can in no way be construed as other than an unambiguous signal of what it said in writing.

Our efforts were geared to strengthen not the tone, but the substance, of the message that these were indeed last warnings; that it was incumbent upon the Iraqi leadership to do everything in its power to help the United Nations inspectors to absolve them, once and for all, of the charge of continuing to produce weapons of mass destruction and of continuing to conceal whatever it had of that nature, especially those biological and chemical agents that remained unaccounted for.

Today, we continue to look for the same thing: a peaceful solution. We are looking for a solution that will not require military involvement, while reassuring the world that there are no lurking dangers whatsoever of the sort that Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) deals with. In that vein, yesterday's European Union summit declaration should be seen as the latest significant initiative aiming at similar ends.

I happen to speak on behalf of another old country — founded in 1071, precisely five years after the French, according to Mr. Straw, founded Britain in 1066. And this old country has every reason to be worried. Because, along with the people of Iraq and other neighbouring countries, it is Turkey which has been receiving the raw impact of instability to its south. We cannot observe what is taking place in this oldest part of the world with any degree of indifference.

When, in 1991, for instance, nearly 500,000 refugees entered Turkey in distress, many old countries of Europe were loath to accept more than a mere 20 to 90 refugees, men, women and children. Throughout the 1990s, Thomas Friedman and others talked and wrote about Amazon tribesmen watching satellite television and demanding New York prices for their ounces of gold. Literature, both scholarly and shoddy, about globalization, extolling the beneficial effects of that process, abounded all over the world. And, throughout that decade, my country, for the first time in 1,000 years, was not able to trade to its south, because of the sanctions imposed on Iraq. Instead, we had to fight and lose tens of thousands of our most promising generation to contain and finally eradicate terrorism of the worst sort. Time has shown the truth.

Today, the very talk of war has a debilitating effect on our already fragile economy. Whatever the promise of our riches, and of the opportunities that my country abundantly possesses and that the Turkish people offer, foreign investors and other people shy away from the manifold uncertainties that seem to haunt the region.

Clearly, the Turkish people have every reason and right to desire intensely to see an end to this crisis — and, of course, a peaceful one. But even today, in spite of all I have been recounting, there are those in some quarters who would tell us that Turkey has an agenda with regard to Iraq. I would remind them of the Turkish proverb cautioning against those anglers who prefer murky waters. I am sure other languages have their equivalent warning against those who do not want you to see what they are actually seeking to achieve.

Turkey has no agenda other than reaffirming the territorial integrity and political unity of Iraq and defending the rights of all its people — Arab, Kurdish, Turcoman, Assyrian, Chaldean and others — to live in security, at peace with the world and in peace among themselves, as citizens of a country collectively benefiting from its riches.

We continue to hope that the Council will remain the focal point. Iraq must fully comply with its disarmament obligations. The international pressure exerted to that end should be pursued forthwith. The Iraqi authorities should be keenly aware that time is of the essence. More important, we should recognize that intense diplomatic efforts backed by a credible force posture still seem to be, especially in this case, the most plausible means to achieve progress. After all, the immediate, unconditional, and complete disarmament of Iraq is still the serious concern confronting international peace and security that it has been since 1991.

In that connection, we wish to commend Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for their work and to salute their efforts towards reaching the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. We have full confidence in their objectivity and professionalism. We hope that the recent steps taken by the Iraqi Government — including allowing surveillance flights, encouragement of private interviews without minders in or outside Iraq, and the provision of additional documentation on outstanding disarmament issues — will prove to constitute substantive progress, thus serving the aim of achieving the long-desired proactive cooperation on the part of Iraq.

Before I conclude, I wish to underline two considerations that are foremost in our minds.

The first of these concerns the plight of the Iraqi people. The people of Turkey have close historical and cultural ties with them, along with human bonds. We are cognizant of their difficult situation and dire humanitarian conditions under the duress of harsh economic sanctions coupled with the abuse of resources, which have both gone unabated for years now. The people of Turkey know very well that they will continue to be their neighbours, next year, the year after and forever.

Secondly, Turkey attaches utmost importance to the unity and coherence of the Security Council. As we enter the corridor leading to this Chamber, we see the replica of the Kadesh Agreement, written in cuneiform on a great stone. It is a gift of Turkey to the United Nations, in fact, a gift of the Turkish soil, which has seen the dawn and rise of many empires, from the Hittites to the Ottoman. The original of this great stone of the Kadesh Agreement is in Turkey. It was signed between the Egyptians and the Hittites in 1270 B.C., that is, some 3,300 years ago, and it attests to the first-ever written agreement between two States.

Indeed, the Security Council being the only tool humanity has been able to achieve after more than three millennia of diplomacy, it is incumbent upon the members of the Council to let collective wisdom prevail. Bridging whatever gap there may be in the Council will maintain the unity and the legitimacy of this body while proving its relevance in these critical times.

For Iraq, it is the moment of truth. Iraq should now act with conviction and in a manner convincing for others in this defining hour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Moura (Brazil): Brazil has been following with concern and apprehension the situation regarding Iraq, fully aware of the implications that developments related to it may have for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The implications of the current situation and the risk of war it entails are already being felt throughout the world, through increased uncertainty, political divisions and jittery markets. There is no doubt that an armed conflict will entail great costs in human, political and economic terms. The large anti-war manifestations we have witnessed over the weekend in many countries, including my own, clearly show that significant segments of opinion within those countries view such a course of action with uneasiness and doubt, to say the least.

We have noted the opinions already put forward by Council members. We believe that holding an open debate in the wake of the presentations made by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei on Friday, 14 February provides the wider international community with a valuable opportunity for expressing views on an issue that affects us all.

The chief inspectors' presentations provide us the most recent, informative and impartial appraisals of the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). This report on their work shows the progress achieved so far, the difficulties involved and the need for immediate, active and unconditional cooperation with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the part of the Iraqi authorities.

Brazil has consistently called for Iraq's full compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1441 (2002), so as to ensure the complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and other proscribed weapons, and supports further peaceful efforts within the context of the Organization towards achieving those ends. Resolution 1441 (2002) provides a framework whose possibilities must be thoroughly explored. These clearly involve full, active and unconditional cooperation on the part of the Iraqi authorities with the inspectors, greater efficiency of the inspection regime, and the development of verification and monitoring mechanisms, such as those stipulated in resolution 1284 (1999). Suggestions have been put forward in this regard by Council members, notably France, Russia and Germany. We support the goals of these initiatives. A peaceful solution to this crisis is possible. As there is still hope for peace, we must insist on it.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Ngo Duc Thang (Viet Nam): Viet Nam has followed with deep concern the latest developments surrounding Iraq, which lead to an assumption that war is inevitable. Under these circumstances, we welcome the convening of this open meeting for all Member States to express their views on this crucial issue on the agenda of the Security Council, which would have far-reaching implications for our Organization and its ability to promote the attainment of world peace and security.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our view that all peaceful means must be exhausted to find a political solution to the Iraqi issue in conformity with the United Nations Charter and international law. Viet Nam strongly believes that war is not inevitable and that there is still a chance for a peaceful solution to the Iraq issue based on respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and on the preservation of the authority and credibility of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We advocate a peaceful solution instead of military action also because we understand the consequences of a war, especially in terms of untold human suffering and material destruction for the ordinary people of the parties concerned, as well as the multifaceted impact on the region and in the world over.

The reports provided by the heads of two United Nations inspection teams, Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, at the Security Council briefing on 14 February 2003 clarified a number of issues raised at the previous meeting on Iraq. We have also learned that the Government of Iraq has demonstrated a new willingness to cooperate with the inspectors in a number of areas, such as providing new documentation on the outstanding issues, agreeing to aerial reconnaissance over its territory and allowing Iraqi scientists to be interviewed without witnesses. Moreover, both inspectors said that they had found no evidence indicating that Iraq has and was trying to hide weapons of mass destruction or prohibited chemical weapons.

We share the views of a large number of other delegations that the inspections have made real progress and have not been completed. Therefore inspections should continue, and the inspectors should be trusted and provided with all possible assistance to carry out their work.

My delegation is particularly concerned about the dire humanitarian consequences of a possible military conflict for the civilian population of Iraq, who have already suffered tremendously from the ongoing sanctions. According to the assessment made by Mr. Kenzo Oshima, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, at his briefing on 13 February 2003, under a "medium-case scenario" of a possible war, up to 10 million people may require food assistance during and after the start of the conflict, while up to half of the Iraqi population may be without access to potable water. And there is the potential that 2 million people could become internally displaced, with 600,000 to 1.45 million refugees and asylum seekers.

Another aspect that has also been brought to our attention is the negative impact that an armed conflict could have on the very fragile situation in the Middle East. A military action would further complicate the

already difficult problems in the region. We also fear that it would affect the global economy at the time when many economies are struggling to recover from recession.

Taking into consideration all these aspects, we believe that, at present, constructive dialogue between the concerned parties and uninterrupted work on the part of the United Nations inspectors are still the most effective means of achieving a peaceful settlement of the Iraqi issue.

Let me conclude my statement by saying that we are convinced that the Security Council members will take into consideration all views expressed in this meeting, discharge their responsibilities in an objective manner, and facilitate a peaceful settlement which enjoys the full support of the vast majority of the people and countries of the world, so as to fulfil the Council's important task of maintaining international peace and security.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Peru, on whom I now call.

Mr. De Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Peru endorses the legal approach requiring the Government of Iraq fully to comply with all its obligations in the area of disarmament, including the total elimination of its weapons of mass destruction, according to the terms of resolution 1441 (2002) and the other applicable resolutions of the Security Council. International norms also impose on Iraq the obligation to cooperate with the United Nations inspectors in an immediate, active and unconditional fashion, as was stated by the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, Mr. Hans Blix, in his report on Friday 14 February.

Unfortunately, we are still seeing a manifest lack of cooperation from Iraq. The Government of Iraq must understand once and for all that the only possibility that it has of normalizing its relations with the international community is immediate disarmament and unconditional compliance with the Security Council resolutions. Only such actions could be considered by the international community as verifiable guarantees that Iraq possesses no programmes or weapons of mass destruction. Only in this way can we prevent the authority and legitimacy of the United Nations from being undermined.

The Government of Peru is convinced that conflicts and threats to international peace and security — as recently stated by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan — must be resolved pursuant to the principles and mechanisms established in the Charter of the United Nations. This means that the use of force, as the Secretary-General has also asserted, must be considered as the last available recourse, but it is also important to note here that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, it is also a legitimate recourse in order to guarantee international peace and security.

Current developments are putting to the test the United Nations security system. But those developments stem from the violation by the Government of Iraq of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations in attacking Kuwait and, more recently, from its systematic refusal to implement the measures for total disarmament of weapons of mass destruction established by the Security Council. More than a decade has elapsed, and the problem still exists, jeopardizing the efficiency of the system of collective security of this Organization.

It can be said that, as matters stand, the United Nations and the international security system are being put to the test.

Peru takes the view that the crisis must be resolved within the normative framework of the United Nations, in particular in the context of the decisions taken by the Security Council, and that, as a matter of priority, all possibilities for a peaceful solution must be exhausted. We must do this. But such a peaceful solution will also hinge on immediate, unilateral and total disarmament on the part of the Government of Iraq, according to the provisions and terms set by resolution 1441 (2002).

The Government of Peru is aware of the complex nature of the inspectors' verification task and of the difficulty involved in arriving at unequivocal results in their activities. However, at the same time it can be inferred from their reports that the mandate of complete and total disarmament of weapons of mass destruction established by the Council has not been complied with in full.

In this regard, my Government endorses the demand for the full implementation of resolution 1441 (2002) within a set time frame. Time should not and

cannot be used to strip the resolutions of the Security Council of all substance or useful effect.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Japan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): I wish to thank you very much, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Hans Blix and to Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei for their reports to the Council this past Friday.

The issue of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction represents a threat to international peace and security. It is a matter of serious concern not only for certain specific countries but also for the entire international community. Underlying our concerns is the fact that in the past, Iraq has actually used chemical weapons and that, over the course of the past 12 years, it has challenged the authority and credibility of the United Nations by continuing to disregard its obligations under numerous resolutions of the Security Council.

In order to resolve this issue peacefully, Japan has been making its own diplomatic efforts, including by urging Iraq proactively to dispel every suspicion, to abide by all relevant Security Council resolutions and to abandon its weapons of mass destruction.

While resolution 1441 (2002), which was adopted unanimously by the Security Council, affirmed that Iraq was in material breach of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 687 (1991), through which Iraq committed to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction, it also provided Iraq with a final opportunity to comply with its obligations.

Japan hopes — as do all countries — that this issue will be resolved peacefully, but it is important to stress that that depends upon Iraq's attitude. Based on the deliberations of the Security Council to date, as well as on the intelligence briefing by United States Secretary of State Powell, on 5 February and on the reports by the weapons inspectors on 14 February, we cannot help but conclude that the declaration submitted by Iraq in response to resolution 1441 (2002) was neither complete nor accurate and that Iraq is not fully and proactively cooperating with the resumed inspections. To the best of our knowledge, only Iraq — no other Member State — has expressed the view in the Council that it has been cooperating fully and proactively.

We are aware that, in countries around the world, there is strong opposition to war. We share the desire to resolve this issue peacefully. It should be stressed, however, that the root of the problem is whether Iraq will radically change its attitude, cooperate immediately, proactively and without conditions and eliminate its weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. In his report to the Council on 14 February, Mr. Blix reaffirmed that Iraq's response thus far has been inadequate. Therefore, even if the inspections are continued and strengthened, they will hardly lead to the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction unless Iraq fundamentally changes its attitude of cooperating only passively. There is serious doubt as to the effectiveness of continued inspections.

In our view, it is crucial now that the international community remain united and that it continue to put strong pressure on Iraq. If the Security Council fails to act in unity, it will not only damage the credibility of the United Nations but also send the wrong message to Iraq. It would also lead to an ongoing threat, throughout the world, of terror by weapons of mass destruction.

The Government of Japan attaches great importance to international cooperation. Based on the fact that Iraq is not fully cooperating or fully discharging its obligations, we consider it desirable that the Security Council adopt a new resolution that clearly demonstrates the determined attitude of the international community. The Council should strive to adopt such a resolution. Diplomatic efforts have been made for 12 long years; Iraq now has very limited time. Japan sincerely hopes that the Council will be united and that it will take effective action to fulfil its responsibilities for international peace and security.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of New Zealand, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes this open debate. The Council is dealing with issues that are of vital importance to us all.

Countries that are not members of the Security Council last had the opportunity to address these issues in the debate four months ago, on 16 October. Since then, pursuant to resolution 1441 (2002), inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and of the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have returned to Iraq. The Council heard their reports on 27 January and again on 14 February.

The first report suggested that, while Iraq was cooperating on process, it had not cooperated sufficiently on substance. The heads of UNMOVIC and IAEA returned to Baghdad to impress on it that only full compliance with the requirements of the United Nations that it disarm and be seen to disarm would prevent the serious consequences warned of in resolution 1441 (2002). Last Friday's report suggests that Iraq has moved, at least in part, to accommodate some of the inspectors' requests. But it still must answer serious questions about material related to weapons of mass destruction that remained unanswered in 1998 when United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspectors left.

The New Zealand Government calls on Iraq to move rapidly to provide the information and cooperation requested of it to avert the catastrophe that war would bring to its people. The New Zealand Government recognizes that the Security Council must be able to authorize force as a last resort to uphold its resolution. It does not, however, believe that such a decision would be justified at this time. The inspectors' reports strongly imply that their work is useful in pursuing the objectives of the United Nations as laid out in a series of resolutions, and, as long as that is so, it should continue.

The New Zealand Government has a very strong preference for a diplomatic solution to this crisis. We place considerable weight on the inspection and disarmament process. We believe that it should run its course. We do not support military action against Iraq without a mandate from the Security Council, and we do not believe that the Council would be justified in giving that mandate at this time. Our position is based on our strong support for multilateralism, the international rule of law and our respect for the authority of the Security Council. We will uphold the Council's decisions, but we urge it at this time to ensure that all available diplomatic means are used to pursue the disarmament of Iraq as set out in the Council's resolutions.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Mahmasani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to join preceding speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, and in thanking your predecessor, the Ambassador of France, and also Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei.

The Arab Summit convened in Beirut last March adopted a resolution in which it categorically rejected any attack against Iraq or any threat against the peace and security of any Arab State. Such an attack was considered a threat to collective Arab national security. The resolution also welcomed Iraq's commitment to respecting the independence, sovereignty and security of the State of Kuwait, and it called upon Iraq to cooperate in order to find a rapid solution to the issue of prisoners of war and detainees, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

The reports of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) presented by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei on 14 February confirmed some progress in the inspections process. They also confirmed Iraq's cooperation, which leads us to stress the need for those operations to continue until such time as the Iraqi file can be closed and the sanctions can be lifted, in accordance with paragraph 22 of resolution 687 (1991).

Mr. Blix reported that:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The situation has improved. ...(*S/PV.4707, p. 2*)
>
> "All inspections were performed without notice and access was almost always provided promptly. (*ibid.*)
>
> "...
>
> "So far, UNMOVIC has found no such weapons [of mass destruction]". (*ibid., p. 3*)

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The conclusions reached by Mr. ElBaradei in his report include the following:

(*spoke in English*)

> "We have to date found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in Iraq." (*S/PV.4707, p. 9*)

(*spoke in Arabic*)

In the light of the conclusions reached by the inspectors, who are the only legitimate authority entrusted with the verification and submission of evidence to the Security Council, there is no justification for waging war against Iraq. Therefore we ask: why a war? What are the imminent danger and sudden threats that would justify it?

The inspectors are pursuing their inspections throughout Iraq. The eyes of the Security Council are on Iraq. Satellites and reconnaissance aircraft fly through the skies of Iraq. Where, therefore, is the danger posed so starkly by Iraq as to warrant a war within weeks? The insistence on waging war against Iraq at a time when the inspectors are striving to verify that country's disarmament of its weapons of mass destruction raises the question as to whether the war is actually intended to disarm Iraq of such weapons or to achieve other objectives.

The countries of the Middle East — with the exception of Israel of course — call for a halt in the preparations for war against Iraq. International polls indicate a worldwide rejection of war. Seventy-seven per cent of the British reject war and 59 per cent of Americans call for the inspectors to be given more time. From Sydney to New York, millions have demonstrated against the impending war in Iraq.

The imminent threat to the peace and stability of the Arab nation is Israel's arsenal of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their delivery systems. Israel continues to occupy Arab territories and pursues a policy of destruction of the Palestinian people. For the past 22 years, it has rejected the implementation of Security Council resolution 487 (1981), which calls on Israel to submit its nuclear programmes and facilities to the IAEA safeguards regime. For the past 12 years, it has rejected the implementation of paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991), which calls for the creation of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Why do we condone Israel's behaviour and why do the inspection teams not head there to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction? Why, I ask, are there such double standards?

Amidst the cloud of war hanging over the region, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the League of Arab States met in Cairo on 16 February and confirmed the Arab countries' rejection of any act of aggression against or threat to the peace and security of any Arab State. They considered any such threat to be a threat to collective Arab security. The Council of Foreign Ministers also rejected any political plan or policy to impose changes on the region, to interfere in its internal affairs or to ignore the legitimate interests of the peoples of the region.

We hope that the end of the cold war late in the last century will not signal a prelude to the onset of hot wars in the new century, beginning with a war on Iraq. The option of war represents a failure of the Security Council and a collapse of the present international system, as well as a challenge to the United Nations Charter, which is the sole safety valve for protecting countries, particularly the weaker ones, and for preserving international peace and security.

To preserve the peace in the Arab region and throughout the world, we call on everyone to reject the option of war and to give the inspectors sufficient time to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Iraqi question. The statement adopted by the European Union summit in Brussels said, in part:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The Union's objective for Iraq remains full and effective disarmament ... We want to achieve this peacefully. It is clear that this is what the people of Europe want."

It is clear by now that this is what the peoples of the world want. Let us not fail them.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ukraine, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): We are pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council. Today's meeting provides a unique opportunity to hear the views of numerous delegations on the most burning issue of the day.

More than half a century ago, speaking about the efforts to achieve peace, Sir Winston Churchill said:

> "Vast and fearsome as the human scene has become, personal contact of the right people, in the right places, at the right time, may yet have a potent and valuable part to play in the cause of peace which is in our hearts".

A few days ago, thousands of people gathered here as a vast and fearsome ocean at the United Nations, calling

it the right place for the right and adequate decision to be taken in order to preserve the peace.

On behalf of the Ukrainian delegation, I wish to join those who believe that the right people, gathered today in the Security Council, will find the right solution to the critical issue on our agenda, and I express, Mr. President, our full support for your strenuous efforts to lead the Council towards that goal.

Ukraine is extremely concerned about the situation around Iraq. We understand that there may exist serious grounds for suspecting Iraq of concealing its weapons of mass destruction. The position of Ukraine is well known and clear: Iraq must fulfil all its obligations under respective Security Council resolutions, resolution 1441 (2002) included.

Ukraine welcomes the outcome of the inspections and the report presented to the Council on 14 February by the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as well as the move by the United States to provide the United Nations with additional information.

It is imperative that the United Nations inspectors continue their work so as to be able to clarify the unresolved questions of the disarmament of Iraq. The questions still remain.

I would like to express to Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei Ukraine's confidence in their mission and our full support. We have already demonstrated it through the work of the Ukrainian experts in UNMOVIC. We consider the inspection and monitoring mechanisms to be the best way to detect, destroy and verify the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

It is perfectly clear that the work of UNMOVIC and the IAEA can be effective only with full cooperation in good faith on the part of Iraq. We call upon the Iraqi authorities to translate concretely and urgently their declared commitments into active cooperation and collaboration with the inspection process, as provided for in resolution 1441 (2002). We urge Iraq to adopt a more proactive approach, to make further explanations and clarifications on the issues raised by the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, the Director General of IAEA and the United States Secretary of State and, ultimately, to disarm in compliance with the Security Council's resolutions.

The Security Council has a common stand on the issue of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Ukraine's position has been unequivocally aimed at achieving the disarmament of Iraq in the most effective way possible, while ensuring at all times that this goal is achieved at the lowest cost in terms of human suffering. Under the present circumstances, it is critical to make further steps towards achieving the unity of the Security Council on this issue without undermining the ongoing battle against international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We are entering a crucial stage in the consideration of the Iraqi issue. The Ukrainian delegation believes that the option of a political and diplomatic solution has not been fully exhausted and that it can still provide effective results. As long as there is the slightest hope for a peaceful settlement, we should exert our utmost efforts to achieve it. Ukraine, on its part, is ready to make a further practical contribution to the international efforts aimed at achieving a successful settlement of the Iraqi crisis and at ensuring international security.

As the world is pinning its hopes on the United Nations and the Security Council in making the decision, we have to weigh all the pros and cons and consider what lies ahead not only in the forthcoming weeks and months, but years. We must make sure that our decision is guided by wisdom and responsibility.

War is the last and worst resort, and I cannot but agree with one of the speakers who said here earlier that war is always the sanction of failure.

What the world needs most today is peace. Let us stay united and work tirelessly for it. Let us give peace yet another chance.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Oman.

Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first of all to thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Security Council for quickly agreeing to the request of the Group of Non-Aligned States to hold this open meeting to study the report presented by the heads of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the destruction of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The Security Council is meeting today to study and important question, namely the assessment of the conclusions of the teams of inspectors entrusted with the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the monitoring and verifying of the presence of any such weapons. We have studies with interest the two reports submitted by the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC and Director General of IAEA, Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, respectively.

We are convinced that significant results in fact have truly been achieved. These achievements are consonant with Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) on the one hand, and are also in accordance to a great extent with the demands of the chief inspector. During the meetings of the inspectors in Baghdad he asked the Iraqi Government to adopt three measures. The first was to allow for free and unconditional aerial surveillance through surveillance reconnaissance aircraft. The second was for private interviews with Iraqi scientists without third parties present. The third was that Iraq adopt and enact legislation prohibiting the possession or local manufacturing of weapons of mass destruction. Iraq has recently done so. It has been involved in dispelling concerns regarding substantive issues. We have seen this in the statements of international inspectors and through Iraqi acceptance of overflights of American U-2 planes of its airspace.

We welcome the positive steps undertaken by Iraq to cooperate with UNMOVIC and the IAEA and believe that such positive cooperation, which is continuing between Iraq and UNMOVIC, will lead to a settlement of remaining unresolved issues.

We understand the profound and real concerns of the United States and United Kingdom regarding the dangers of the use of weapons of mass destruction for the security and stability of the world. We welcome the positions of member States of the Security Council. In particular the positions of the permanent members, for they have demonstrated a great sense of responsibility during study of the issue. We understand all of that.

However, it also behooves the international community to maintain international peace and stability. Therefore, the United States and the United Kingdom are crucial partners for the Middle East. They must work to avoid war in this region. The consequences would be tragic not only for Iraq but also for the region and the entire world.

Thus, we hope that all the members of the Council will be able to take position designed to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and other States of the region by peaceful means and through the United Nations. In light of this, and aware of the legal, political and moral responsibility that devolves on Council members to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles of the Charter, we hope that the Council will discharge its responsibilities and make it possible for UNMOVIC and the IAEA in accordance with the demands of their mandate. We hope that the Council will make it possible for both bodies to continue their work, discharge their responsibilities under their mandates.

Thus, efforts would be pooled to facilitate inspections, which have proved to be effective. That would enable the peaceful implementation of the Council's resolutions. Another report would then be presented to the Council on Iraqi cooperation with the international inspectors in the area of the destruction of weapons of mass destruction, if they existed.

In that context, and in light of regional and international events and of the repeated statements we have heard opposing military action against Iraq, my delegation reiterates the hope that it will be possible to avoid any military action of any kind. For that would threaten the security and stability of the Gulf region in particular and the Middle East as a whole. Therefore this prompts us to support the initiatives for peace to deal with this issue.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm the need for Iraq to quickly and unconditionally fulfil its remaining obligations to facilitate matters for UNMOVIC and the IAEA. We also urge the Council to exhaust all peaceful means and diplomatic efforts to implement the relevant resolutions for international peace and security, to put an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people and to ensure respect for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Iraq.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council at

this very sensitive time. I should also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the special relationship between our two friendly countries, which is daily growing stronger. At the same time, I would like to express our appreciation and admiration for the principled and wise leadership provided by France during its presidency of the Council last month.

Your prompt response, Sir, to the request made by the representative of South Africa, on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, for the convening of an open meeting of the Council allowing all States Members of the Organization to participate, rather than restricting participation to Council members only, was an eloquent expression of your recognition of the fact that questions pertaining to global peace and security are not the preserve of certain States alone. Nor do such issues affect the interests of some and not of others. The situation in Iraq is thus of concern to all, making an international consensus indispensable.

I am not the first to say that the eyes of the whole world are on the Council to see how it will deal with the situation in Iraq. Analysts and observers agree that the international system is at a crossroads. The Council's decision on this question will have enormous repercussions for international relations in general and for the future of the United Nations in particular.

Like all the other States of the region, the Republic of Yemen would like to express profound concern about the tense situation prevailing in the region – the massing of troops, the media war and the constant threat of the use of force against Iraq. In this regard, we would like to make a number of points.

First, we greatly appreciate the efforts of the Security Council and the interest shown by the majority of its members in exhausting all peaceful means to ensure the implementation of its resolutions on the disarmament of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, in particular through the recent resolution 1441 (2002). The implementation of the provisions of that resolution would be a step towards dealing with the consequences of the 1991 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In this context, the Government of the Republic of Yemen welcomes the cooperation extended by the Iraqi Government to the international inspection teams in implementation of the resolution to which I referred.

We reaffirm once again the importance of the Iraqi Government's honouring its commitments regarding the remaining issues raised by the inspectors, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legality. At the same time, we believe that Iraq must honour its commitments with regard to resolving the issue of Kuwaiti missing persons in accordance with Security Council resolutions and with the decisions taken at the Beirut Arab Summit. This is a humanitarian question that continues to act as a stumbling block on the road to a rapprochement between the two countries. It should be resolved in such a way as to end the estrangement between those two brotherly peoples and ensure Arab solidarity.

Secondly, we reaffirm the importance of implementing the remaining relevant Security Council resolutions setting out the Council's objectives. In this regard, we stress that the Security Council is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security on behalf of the international community. We would also like to reaffirm the validity of the provisions of the United Nations Charter, which make it clear that nothing can justify interference in the internal affairs of a State. There is no doubt that interfering in the internal affairs of a given country in order to bring about change there would constitute a very serious precedent and would cause confusion and chaos in international relations. It would take us back to the era of the League of Nations, which was followed by a world war, something that would be unacceptable for human beings in the twenty-first century.

Thirdly, the Republic of Yemen reaffirms its support for Security Council resolutions in general and in particular for those pertaining to the question of Iraq in particular. However, my country has always stressed the need for all the members of the Council to act with a sense of responsibility so that the Council cannot be accused of selectivity or double standards with regard to such resolutions. Paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991), concerning the elimination of weapons of mass destruction from all States of the region, including Israel, must be implemented. Legally binding international resolutions concerning the Palestinian question must be implemented with the same zeal that is shown in the implementation of the resolutions concerning Iraq.

The Government of the Republic of Yemen has noted with satisfaction the accurate and responsible views expressed by some countries, calling for Members of this Organization to look further than their noses and to go beyond narrow, immediate self-interest

so as to lead the international community towards ensuring security and stability in the Middle East in a manner that safeguards the interests of all.

Once again, I would like to reiterate my country's concern about the ongoing threat to invade the brotherly country Iraq. My country strongly opposes any military action outside the framework of international legality, whatever pretexts and justifications are put forward. The drums of war and the dust raised by the military massing obscure the truth. It would be both wise and necessary for the Security Council to give peaceful means a chance, as they have not yet been exhausted. In this respect, we support the opinion of the majority of States, which have called for giving the inspection teams the necessary time to finish their task without time pressure or other influence.

Let us not forget that at an earlier stage the inspection teams destroyed a great deal more than was destroyed by war in 1991 or by successive aerial bombardments of Iraq. Continuing the inspection and monitoring regime is the only way to close this ominous file. The only cost of peaceful action is patience and perseverance. Military invasion, however, would lead to the further destruction of Iraq and the further destabilization of the region. That would constitute a threat to peace and security throughout the world. It would also take international relations back to the policy of force and the logic of military blocs and military solutions. That would be inconsistent with the spirit and the letter of the United Nations Charter.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Greece, on whom I now call.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, as well as the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, declare that they align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the situation in Iraq, as evidenced by the extraordinary meeting of the European Council held yesterday to discuss the ongoing crisis over that country. On that occasion the members of the European Council also met with Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Pat Cox.

The European Union reaffirms the 27 January conclusions of its General Affairs and External Relations Council, as well as the terms of the public démarche of 4 February 2003 to Iraq, which remain valid.

The European Union believes that the way the unfolding of the situation in Iraq is handled will have an important impact on the world in the coming decades. We are determined to deal effectively with the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We are committed to the United Nations remaining at the centre of the international order. We recognize that the primary responsibility for dealing with Iraqi disarmament lies with the Security Council. We pledge our full support to the Council in discharging its responsibilities.

The European Union's objective for Iraq remains full and effective disarmament from weapons of mass destruction in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, in particular resolution 1441 (2002). We want to achieve this peacefully. It is clear that this is what the people of Europe want. War is not inevitable. Force should be used only as a last resort. It is for the Iraqi regime to end this crisis by complying with the demands of the Security Council.

The European Union reiterates its full support for the ongoing work of the United Nations inspectors. They must be given the time and resources that the Security Council believes they need. However, inspections cannot continue indefinitely in the absence of full Iraqi cooperation. This must include the provision of all additional and specific information on the issues that have been raised in the inspectors' reports.

Baghdad should have no illusions. It must disarm and cooperate immediately and fully. Iraq has a final opportunity to resolve the crisis peacefully. The Iraqi regime alone will be responsible for the consequences if it continues to flout the will of the international community and does not take this last chance.

The European Union recognizes that the unity and firmness of the international community, as expressed in the unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), and the military build-up have been essential in obtaining the return of the inspectors.

These factors will remain essential if we are to achieve the full cooperation we seek.

The European Union will work with Arab countries and the League of Arab States. We will encourage them, separately and jointly, to bring home to Saddam Hussain the extreme danger of miscalculation of the situation and the need for full compliance with resolution 1441 (2002). We support Turkey's regional initiatives with the neighbours of Iraq and Egypt.

In this regional context, the European Union reiterates its firm belief in the need to reinvigorate the peace process in the Middle East and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We continue to support early implementation of the roadmap endorsed by the Quartet. Terror and violence must end; so must settlement activity. Palestinian reforms must be sped up. In that respect, President Arafat's statement that he will appoint a prime minister is a welcome step in the right direction.

The unity of the international community is vital in dealing with these problems. The European Union is committed to working with all our partners, especially the United States, for the disarmament of Iraq, for peace and stability in the region and for a decent future for all its people.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate. I also wish to thank the delegation of South Africa for having requested this meeting.

I believe we should ask ourselves why we are gathered here once again today to deal with the question of Iraq. The answer is simple: on 2 August 1990 Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait. Once all peaceful means to resolve the situation had been exhausted, the Security Council authorized the use of force to restore the independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait. In addition, by resolution 687 (1991), which established the terms of the ceasefire, the Council decided that Iraq had to agree unconditionally to the elimination of all its weapons of mass destruction under international supervision. That is a central aspect of the resolution.

More than 12 years later, Iraq has not complied with its obligations and continues to defy the will of the international community and the authority of the Security Council. That is why we are here today to deal with this issue. As Argentina's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Carlos Ruckauf, stated in the General Assembly last September,

> "It is not a good thing when some Member States do not abide by United Nations resolutions. It is intolerable that these resolutions remain unimplemented when issues related to the very existence of mankind on the planet are involved." (*A/57/PV.12, p. 26*)

He went on to say that

> "The existence of arsenals with bacteriological, chemical and other similar weapons that can be used in a traditional or terrorist war is a matter that affects all men, women and children of the world." (*ibid.*)

I think it is appropriate to recall those words, which, despite being obvious, seem to be absent from the debate on this matter and from the coverage of this issue in the international press. No one in the Council has stated that Iraq has complied with its obligations or that we are dealing with an abusive demand being made by a State or group of States of a weaker country. Argentina shares the view that Iraq must be obliged to fully meet its disarmament obligations. The Iraqi regime must understand once and for all that the international community will not accept any other alternative and that the Security Council is united in that objective, even though there may be difference of opinion as regards methods and, in particular, as to the time frame for achieving the goal.

The Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, has recognized that the behaviour of the Iraqi regime constitutes a threat to international peace and security. That is why, on 8 November 2002, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 (2002), which gave Iraq one last opportunity.

In our opinion, the Council must exert constant pressure on this stubborn Government to comply with what the international community has been demanding for the last 12 years. The international community has been very patient. It cannot accept a repetition of the history of concealment and deceit that took place between 1991 and 1998. Doing so would not only

affect the credibility of the Security Council; it would also represent a grave failure to those of us who are taking part in the struggle against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The question is how to achieve that objective. In our opinion, the inspections that resumed last November have yielded results, and they must continue. We support Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, who have an extremely important and difficult task that they are carrying out with objectivity, professionalism and efficiency. But in order for the inspections to produce full results, the Iraqi Government must abandon its reluctant attitude and provide the active and substantive cooperation required by resolution 1441 (2002). It is also worth recalling that Iraq must comply with the other obligations set out in resolution 687 (1991), facilitating the return of Kuwaiti property and the repatriation of Kuwaiti and third-country nationals.

In the course of the discussion of this issue, there has been mention of the grave threat to international peace and security posed by possible links between a State in possession of weapons of mass destruction and terrorist organizations, and the Council was given dramatic examples of the risks of chemical and biological weapons. My Government shares this concern and expresses its determination to face the challenges that the link with terrorism may add to this issue. At the same time, my Government takes this opportunity to voice its concern about the continuation of unjust situations in international economic practice. Those situations are exploited by terrorism, which provides an evil opportunity to give voice to the desperation of vast regions of the developing world.

No sense of urgency should divert us from the objective of disarming Iraq by peaceful means. All peaceful options must be explored and exhausted. We must avoid an avoidable war, in which my country would not participate.

But once all peaceful means have been exhausted, if the Iraqi regime persists in its reluctant attitude, and if the purpose of resolution 1441 (2002), which is none other than the complete and verifiable disarm ment of Iraq, cannot be fulfilled, then the serious consequences anticipated in the resolution will take place. But those serious consequences must not include bombing defenceless towns and cities. The lives of men, women and children — who for years have been living under a genocidal dictatorship and who desire freedom and an end to death and desolation — must be preserved. It is in the highest interests of Iraq to seize this last chance.

I would not wish to conclude these remarks without expressing our sympathy and affection for the Iraqi people, which is enduring a situation of deprivation and anxiety for its security, the responsibility for which lies solely with the regime that oppresses them.

As we have stated to the Secretary-General, Argentina is ready, within the framework of the United Nations, to provide humanitarian assistance in order to help relieve the suffering of that people.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Sudan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Manis (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are also most pleased to thank the representative of France for his outstanding leadership of the Council last month.

The holding of this open meeting shows the extraordinary importance that the international community attaches to the crisis in international relations at this critical turning point. We are convinced that the enormous challenges we face require that the international community engage in dialogue and consultation in order to spare the world a war whose negative repercussions would be long-lasting and geographically widespread.

It is crucial that we be guided by the principles of the United Nations Charter, which we all consider as the ultimate guideposts for sparing the world the agony and tragedy of war. The Charter guarantees that force shall be used only as a last resort, after all other options have been exhausted. The reports delivered by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei regarding the inspections in Iraq convince us that continuing the inspections and strengthening their effectiveness can, in fact, achieve the objectives laid down in resolution 1441 (2002).

My country would like to reaffirm the conclusions of the Arab Summit held in Beirut last March, relating to the need to implement resolutions of international legality, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Iraq and Kuwait, and to settle the issue of prisoners of war and missing persons.

We are convinced that Iraq is continuing to cooperate fully with the United Nations inspectors in settling the crisis in a peaceful manner, which prepares the way for the lifting of sanctions. This has been shown by Iraq's genuine will to cooperate with the inspectors and by the strong and encouraging measures undertaken by that country.

Thus, we share the views of several delegations that options other than war must be found. We support approaches based on the peaceful settlement of disputes through the United Nations. We see no justification for the Security Council to adopt an additional resolution, and we request that the inspectors be given the time they need to complete their mission.

Our conviction is based on our unshakeable faith in shared humanitarian values. Let us reject violence and destruction and build a world in which a culture of peace will reign. Let us give peace a chance, and let us provide the children of Iraq a childhood their memories of which will not be ones of carnage and destruction, shelters and orphans.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Saint Lucia. I give him the floor.

Mr. Huntley (Saint Lucia): I have the honour to present a statement today on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), that is, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

The heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, at the end of their fourteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting, which was held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 14 and 15 February 2003, issued the following statement on the situation with regard to Iraq.

> "We, the heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, having considered the situation developing over Iraq, wish to express our profound concern at the escalation of global tensions and their grave implications for the preservation of international peace and security. We are deeply troubled over the humanitarian tragedy that an outbreak of war will bring about and the disastrous effects which it will have on global economic stability.
>
> "We emphasize that no State should have the right to foster the development of weapons of mass destruction in any form, including chemical and biological agents. We recall that the Security Council had compelled Iraq to cease the development and production of weapons of mass destruction and has obligated it to give total access to the United Nations weapons inspectors to verify its compliance with Security Council resolutions.
>
> "We appeal to Iraq to cooperate fully with all the requirements of UNMOVIC and the IAEA inspectors, and to fulfil its commitments to the United Nations and the international community in this regard. We are convinced that Iraq's full and transparent implementation of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) will contribute to the easing of tensions and will strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to bring about a peaceful resolution of the situation.
>
> "We reiterate that the United Nations, through its Security Council, has been charged with the responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. We are, therefore, deeply disturbed at the prospect of the use of military force in Iraq without the endorsement of the United Nations Security Council and in the absence of a final conclusion by the United Nations weapons inspectors that Iraq is in material breach of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).
>
> "We are in total support of the position taken by the United Nations Secretary-General that 'this is an issue not for any one State alone, but for the international community as a whole'. In this connection, we stress that any unilateral action taken outside a United Nations Security Council mandate will undermine the integrity of the United Nations and considerably weaken the multilateral system and its machinery for preserving peace and security.
>
> "We are firmly opposed to the use of armed force at a time when it is clear that diplomatic efforts have not yet been exhausted and when the UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors are reporting some progress and requesting more time to complete their work. We believe that it is essential for all States to support the work of the

inspectors and to create the conditions to allow them to fulfil their mandate.

"We urge the Government of the United States and its military allies on this issue to exercise restraint in their approach to this complex international crisis. We wish to express our particular anxiety at the consequences a war will have not only for the region of the Middle East but for the entire world, and at the disproportionate burden that would be borne by small developing States, including those in the Caribbean, which are ill-prepared to cope with the impact of a global recession provoked by volatile oil prices, severe dislocation to their vital tourism and financial services sectors and falling levels of investment.

"We the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community reaffirm the commitment of the Caribbean Community to a just world order based on respect for the rule of law and social justice, and guaranteeing peace, security and sustainable development for all. We remain committed to international efforts to combat terrorism. We also remain convinced that diplomacy and dialogue present the most enlightened approach to building understanding and to resolving conflicts in a modern and interdependent world."

We thank the Council for the opportunity to present this statement.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Ivanov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): First, allow me to associate myself with the gratitude expressed by previous speakers for the opportunity offered by this meeting of the Security Council in the present format.

The dynamic of the development of events concerning Iraq and the consideration of this question within the Security Council are the focus of the close attention of the President and the Government of the Republic of Belarus. Belarus is convinced that the international community has available to it specific and practical possibilities for maintaining the process of Iraq's disarmament on a political and diplomatic plane. Shifting the problem of Iraq to a military plane without making use of those possibilities would run counter to the interests of international peace and security and the imperatives of international law.

The Republic of Belarus favours the continuation and stepping up of the activities of inspectors in Iraq and calls on the Government of Iraq to follow unswervingly the policy of constructive cooperation with the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We find counterproductive any kind of ultimatum limiting the time frame for the activities of the inspectors or for the process of Iraq's implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Belarus is deeply concerned by the rhetoric in favour of the use of force as a means of resolving the problem and by the continuing escalation of tension around Iraq. We firmly oppose the unilateral use of force against Iraq in violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity and the bypassing of the Security Council.

A solution acceptable to the international community on the question of Iraq can be found only within the framework of the competence of the Security Council and must be strictly complied with by all members of the international community.

The President and the Government of the Republic of Belarus are convinced that comprehensive Iraqi cooperation with the United Nations and the continuing normalization of relations between Iraq and Kuwait will guarantee a definitive solution to the problem of Iraq. We also believe that an integral element of this process is the gradual lifting of the sanctions on Iraq.

The Republic of Belarus calls upon the Security Council to be guided by the need to maintain peace in the Middle East and to prevent the unleashing of a major international conflict with unforeseeable consequences.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Nambiar (India): Since this is the first time we are making a statement in the Security Council in the month of February, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency. I would also like to thank you for providing the general membership an opportunity to express itself on this important issue. Your stewardship of the Security Council comes at a time when the Council is required

to consider some of the most critical and complex issues to arise before it in recent years. We wish you the very best in coping with the challenging tasks that lie ahead of you.

India participated in the last open debate of the Security Council on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, held on 16 and 17 October 2002. Matters have evolved considerably since that time. The landmark resolution 1441 (2002) was adopted unanimously by the Council on 8 November 2002. The resolution facilitated the resumption of United Nations inspections in Iraq after a gap of four years. It has now been almost three months since the recommencement of inspections.

The heads of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have briefed the Council with regular periodicity on the progress of inspections since their recommencement. We have all had the benefit of listening to the carefully worded, concise and thorough briefings by them on 27 January and 14 February. Their reports constitute the essential basis on which the Council would be required to take decisions on a matter of international peace and security. We wish to convey our appreciation for the work of those two bodies and their heads.

Resolution 1441 (2002) is the latest in a series of Security Council resolutions on the disarmament of Iraq and related subjects. Resolution 1441 (2002) provides a stringent regime of inspections designed to accomplish that very task. We call upon Iraq to cooperate actively with the inspections process and to comply fully with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

As many of us understood it, the gist of UNMOVIC Executive Chairman Mr. Hans Blix's message at the briefing of 14 February was that Iraq had been cooperating on process but had not done as much on substance as it was required to do under resolution 1441 (2002). While there is a widespread feeling that inspections have to be given a chance, there is also a feeling that the Council cannot be expected to wait indefinitely to secure immediate, active and unconditional cooperation. The recent deliberations in the Security Council over how to deal with the Iraq issue reflect serious differences in approach on the subject within the Council itself. The Council now needs to move forward with unity of purpose.

India has consistently stood in favour of a peaceful resolution of the Iraq issue. We believe that the objective of the international community is to facilitate the disarmament of Iraq, and that it is necessary to pursue all available options provided for under resolution 1441 (2002). Force should be resorted to only as a last, unavoidable option.

India has also maintained the primacy of the multilateral route in addressing the issue of Iraq. The Prime Minister of India, in his address to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly last year, stated the following:

> "A common destiny is at stake. The world needs collective multilateralism. It needs the United Nations, the coming together and working together of all its nations in the development of a common and collective perspective." (*A/57/PV.4, p. 16*)

That is why we applauded the announcement by President Bush in that very forum to "work with the Security Council to meet our common challenge" (*A/57/PV.2, p. 9*). We continue to believe that the resolution of this issue is best achieved through the collective forum of States, represented by the United Nations.

India is concerned about the difficult humanitarian situation in Iraq. The Iraqi people have suffered severe shortages and privations for more than a decade. Sixty per cent of the Iraqi population currently relies on the United Nations oil for food programme. The programme, which has been run in an exemplary manner by the United Nations, could be jeopardized by military action in Iraq, leading to a humanitarian situation that could leave, by some accounts, as many as 10 million people dependent on the outside world for food assistance. It is important that the Council consider the alleviation of the situation that the Iraqi people find themselves in while considering the larger picture.

India is vitally interested in the peace and security of the Gulf region, with which we have had profound political, cultural, economic and religious ties spread over centuries. Our special concerns with the current crisis arise from the presence of millions of our expatriates who live and work in the Gulf region, from

threats to the security of oil supplies and the volatility of oil prices that could follow military action, and from the build-up of public sentiments in the region.

In a related context, we note that, at the end of last year, Iraq returned the first batch of documents belonging to the Kuwaiti archives, and that, at the beginning of this year, Iraq also handed over some separate items of Kuwaiti properties. Most important is the humanitarian issue involving the search for missing Kuwaitis and other, third- country, nationals. We are happy to note that it has been agreed to start discussions on this issue under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and within the context of the Tripartite Commission. We understand that the second meeting of the newly established Technical Subcommittee has just taken place in Amman. We congratulate Ambassador Vorontsov for his efforts in this direction and would like to see him continue his good work.

At the same time, we would also like to see implementation of provisions relating to the repatriation of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and the return of all Kuwaiti property, as stipulated under resolutions 686 (1991), 687 (1991) and section B of resolution 1284 (1999). We hope that Iraq will act in good faith.

We sense, and the world senses, that the Security Council is coming close to making a decision between war and peace. However, we would urge the Council, before it makes a final determination on the question, to seriously consider the numerous complex ramifications that surround any step taken by it. These include issues such as the dangers posed by the development of weapons of mass destruction and risks of their diversion to non-State actors; the credibility of enforcement action under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter and the question of compliance; the rationale and effectiveness of weapons inspections; and the continuing pressure of sanctions.

Apart from the immediate consequences of military action in a region that is already volatile, the Council will need to take into account the impact of the possible breakup of the concerned State on neighbouring States, and its larger implications for peace, stability and security in the region, as well as the dangers of radicalization of public opinion around the world. Yet another set of issues of a different order of magnitude concern the potential massive internal displacement of people and possible refugee flows, the disruption of oil supplies and other such immediate economic and social repercussions of a possible outbreak of conflict.

We do not, as yet, have clear answers to these questions. These are questions that do not have simple answers, but they are questions that cannot be evaded. As the multilateral organ of the United Nations charged with safeguarding international peace and security, the Security Council must give careful thought to these questions and issues before it makes an irrevocable move.

The President: In view of the lateness of the hour, and with the concurrence of the member of the Council, I would like to suspend the meeting until tomorrow at 10 a.m. sharp. I would like to make an appeal to the members to start at 10 sharp, because we heard 27 speakers this afternoon and another 29 remain on the list.

The meeting was suspended at 6.40 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4709 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4709th meeting

Wednesday, 19 February 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Pleuger	(Germany)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	Chile	Mr. Maquieira
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mrs. D'Achon
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Mexico	Mrs. Arce de Jeannet
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Letter dated 6 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/153).

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The meeting resumed at 10.05 a.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Mauritius, Norway, Paraguay and Serbia and Montenegro, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius), Mr. Kolby (Norway), Mr. Lorzaga (Paraguay) and Mrs. Ninčić (Serbia and Montenegro) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should also like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 18 February 2003 from the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, in which he requests that the Permanent Observer of the Holy See be allowed to deliver a statement during the Security Council's open debate on the item on its agenda entitled "The situation between Iraq and Kuwait". In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall, at the appropriate time, invite the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to address the Council.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Archbishop Migliore (Holy See) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I wish to inform all participants that I intend to suspend this morning's meeting at 12.30 p.m. We shall resume at 3 p.m., followed by consultations.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Qatar, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish you every success. I should also like to thank you for your response to the request of the Non-Aligned Movement to convene this extremely important meeting in order to give Member States an opportunity to express their views on the important matter being debated by the Council: the question of the critical situation in Iraq and the charges levelled against it that it possesses weapons of mass destruction.

Today, we are experiencing dire circumstances that place the world order at a crucial crossroads, an order represented in the United Nations and its purposes and principles and international law, which all seek to consolidate the rules of coexistence and international relations and to preserve the independence and sovereignty of all States. Indeed, those circumstances might thoroughly shake all the efforts that have been made since the Second World War to consolidate the rules of international peace and security and to avoid the scourges of war around the world. Aggravating our concern are the unknown appalling consequences of a new war, which have increased tension in the region and the rest of the world, with no way to foresee its outcome.

Member States joined the United Nations, accepted its Charter and committed themselves to working sincerely with all other States in order to bring views closer together, to strengthen international relations and to respect international treaties. This is done with a view to attaining the greater goal of living in peace and good-neighbourliness, so that States would unite their energies in order to maintain international peace and security and would not use military force, except to serve common interests, in order to preserve mankind's common heritage from war's devastation and destruction.

The State of Qatar has supported and continues to firmly support all efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution of the current world crisis related to the situation in Iraq and at finding an acceptable formula that will save Iraq and its people from the devastation of a new war, since Iraq has suffered enough as a result of a series of wars that have left a trail of destruction in the region in terms of human losses, damaged physical infrastructure and environmental pollution in the region. As can be seen from recent indicators, a new war in Iraq would create a new catastrophe with dire consequences, not only for Iraq itself, but also for its neighbours in the region. It might also lead to a series of accelerated changes in the geopolitical map of the whole Middle East region.

In the heavily clouded atmosphere of war, the State of Qatar has consistently sought to find the best possible way out of this ominous crisis.

As a result, and by virtue of Qatar's capacity as Chairman of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), my Government has called for an extraordinary summit meeting of the OIC member States in order to discuss the best political ways to reach a peaceful solution that will spare Iraq and its people the dangers of a new humanitarian catastrophe. The State of Qatar and the OIC have every hope that the Security Council will reach an agreement that will save the region from tension and war.

On Friday, 14 February, we listened closely to the reports submitted by Mr. Hans Blix, the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), and by Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Afterwards, we also listened carefully to the contributions of the members of the Security Council and their reactions to the two reports of the international inspectors.

In our view, the two reports did not substantially differ from the inspectors' presentation on 27 January of their initial reports on the outcome of their search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. My delegation further notes that, judging by the extensive exchange of views among States Members of the United Nations, opinions in the international community, represented by the Security Council, remain divided. We also note, however, that there is overwhelming support for allowing the international inspectors more time and greater authority and to give the diplomatic efforts a better chance to achieve a peaceful solution. We also continue to insist on the importance of the need to reach a peaceful settlement of the Iraqi question.

In our turn, we call on Iraq to respond to and implement fully the Security Council's resolutions. We appreciate Iraq's response to the resolutions adopted at the Arab summit meeting, held in March 2002, regarding the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. We call on Iraq to resolve the remaining issues with Kuwait, including the question of Kuwaiti prisoners and third-country detainees, and to return the Kuwaiti property remaining in its possession.

While we are on the subject of weapons of mass destruction and the need to respect resolutions of international legitimacy, we wish to place on record our conviction that the work of the Security Council must be transparent and must abandon selectivity and double standards. We also wish to place on record our belief that the United Nations should not offer certain countries special treatment while it insists on the implementation of international resolutions.

The resolutions of the Security Council must be implemented by Israel, which possesses an arsenal of nuclear weapons and refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We call on the international system to subject Israeli nuclear installations and nuclear power facilities to the safeguards of the IAEA.

The President: Let me repeat what I said yesterday. I would suggest that all speakers take their seven minutes fully to address the subject matter. I will say right now that I am grateful for all the kind words to me that they may have thought of, so perhaps we can refrain from addressing kind words to the presidency and save some time for the discussion of the subject matter.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt, on whom I now call.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Three months ago, on 8 November 2002, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 (2002). The adoption of that resolution was in accordance with international legality and demonstrated the importance of moving unanimously, under the Charter of the United Nations, towards the peace option and the solution of problems through the unanimity of the Security Council to that end.

That resolution is being implemented satisfactorily. On 14 February, we heard the reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei on the inspections in Iraq. The message received by the international community affirmed the speedy success of the activities and inspections and held the promise of further such success in the near future. I wish on this occasion to express our appreciation to Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for their efforts in leading the inspection teams with objectivity and professionalism.

The results of their efforts were set out in two balanced reports that confirmed their determination to

pursue their tasks so that they may bear fruit in the near future. This success was demonstrated in the unity of the international community, in international legality and in the unanimity of the Security Council in adopting resolution 1441 (2002), which affirmed the effectiveness of collective action by the Council, which must be maintained.

It must be clear that Iraq's compliance with its obligations under Security Council resolutions and its ongoing responsiveness to the demands of the Council and the inspectors will lead to the speedy completion of the inspections and to an end to the dark tunnel in which it has existed for more than a decade. If we cannot emerge into the fresh air and light — the assured outcome of the commitment of all parties to the rules of international legality — that tunnel may lead us into a deep abyss.

The threat of weapons of mass destruction, the focus of our attention today, is not confined to Iraq. We must bear in mind that all tasks undertaken, voluntarily or under coercion, to disarm Iraq represent a step towards freeing the Middle East from weapons of mass destruction, as provided for in resolution 687 (1991). In addressing the situation in Iraq, members of the Security Council must never forget that the credibility of international law is not solely dependent on eliminating the proscribed Iraqi weapons, to the complete neglect of applying the same criteria to all cases. That credibility hinges on the Security Council's achieving all its objectives and priorities in that context. The disarmament of Iraq must be only the beginning of the process of removing the danger of all weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East. That will confirm the Security Council's credibility in the eyes of the peoples of the region and demonstrate its commitment to justice and equality, the bases for any proper international relations.

The Security Council is called upon today to assume its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We must all uphold the choice of peace in settling the current crisis. We must commit ourselves to achieving this by collective political action. The unity of the Security Council is the only means of strengthening its authority and of validating its credibility. That was demonstrated in the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), which represents the approach that the Council must maintain.

Egypt wishes here to affirm the following points in dealing with the question of Iraq.

First, we must keep in mind that our objective is to achieve a peaceful settlement of this conflict.

Secondly, the inspection process must be fully supported and must continue, without interruption or rigid deadlines, so long as it can achieve positive results. It must achieve its goal of removing all weapons of mass destruction from Iraq.

Thirdly, through its resolutions, which represent an integrated whole, the Security Council is the only body entrusted by the international community to deal with the situation.

Finally, Iraq must continue to cooperate fully with the inspection teams and comply with the terms of the relevant Security Council resolutions with respect to the inspections.

The dangerous repercussions that armed conflict would have for the Middle East and the entire world make it incumbent on all members of the international community to maintain international law and to work, patiently and with determination to reach a peaceful settlement in order to achieve peace and stability and in order to be able to deal with other serious problems and crises faced by the region, such as the tragic situation in the Palestinian territories, as well as to confront the phenomenon of international terrorism, which is a danger to the entire world. We do not doubt at all that war in the region can only fuel terrorism and exacerbate its pernicious effects.

All the peoples of the world are calling for peace. Our countries are hoping that we will be able to give peace a further chance. We have called for an urgent Arab summit that would help create conditions to stop military action. As a contributor to all such forums, Egypt, the oldest country in the world — as old as history itself — appeals to the Council to continue to shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It appeals to every Member State to assume its responsibility to take collective action to achieve that objective.

War, for all its complexities and dangers, sometimes seems to be the easiest path. Peace requires concerted, continued effort and self-control, which befits States that hold the beacon of freedom. They must maintain that beacon, not by force and fire, but by wisdom and law. We will not lose hope of reaching a

peaceful settlement. We will all have to keep the beacon illuminated, because it will light our way to a stable, secure international community, which we can all build based on the edifice of the United Nations and its Charter.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Stagno (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica is a peace-loving country. More than half a century ago, my country totally renounced unilaterally the use of force and entrusted its security to international law and the multilateral machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The organ over which you, Sir, are presiding today, the Security Council, is the sole guarantor of stability and international security for my nation and all its inhabitants. For that reason, my country views the current crisis with Iraq with deep concern.

Over the last 10 years, my country has observed with growing alarm the repeated delays and various obstacles that the Iraqi Government has set up against the process of destruction of its weapons of mass destruction. We have repeatedly demanded that Iraq comply, first, with resolution 687 (1991) and now with resolution 1441 (2002). We have condemned Hussain's tyrannical regime for its countless violations of the fundamental rights of the population, its repeated acts of aggression directed against neighbouring nations, its use of weapons proscribed since the First World War and its outright scorn for democratic principles. The disarmament of Iraq would not only promote stability in the region but would also and above all be of tremendous benefit to the Iraqi people. The elimination of Iraq's proscribed weapons will make it possible for its people to enjoy the dividends of peace.

In this regard, Costa Rica reaffirms the overriding importance of the peaceful disarmament of Iraq pursuant to the mandate of resolutions 687 (1991) and 1441 (2002). We demand from Iraq full, immediate, unconditional and proactive cooperation with the inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We require Iraq to furnish tangible and convincing proof of the complete destruction of all of its weapons of mass destruction and to account for the weapons whose whereabouts are currently unknown.

On the other hand, we are heartened by the statements of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei concerning the growing, albeit still incomplete, cooperation on the part of the Iraqi authorities. We would recall that although it is true that Iraq has never fully cooperated, inspections have yielded positive results. Under the mandate of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) more arms were discovered than during the Gulf war. Moreover, since last 27 November, when inspections resumed under the unanimous mandate of resolution 1441 (2002), we have seen tangible results. Given these circumstances, we must fully trust and support the inspectors. It is vital to give UNMOVIC and the IAEA sufficient time to make a last, sustained effort to verify Iraq's disarmament by means of exhaustive and intrusive inspections. We should allow the inspectors themselves to determine whether it is fruitful to continue their work or whether its effectiveness has been exhausted. For that reason, we urge the Security Council to bolster UNMOVIC by providing it with more human and technical resources so as to make it an even more vigorous and exacting verification mechanism. We are encouraged by the fact that a number of countries have already offered additional assistance in order to enhance the Commission's effectiveness. We urge all nations to provide UNMOVIC with all the information they may hold concerning programmes of proscribed weapons in Iraq.

The Security Council must always act in order to preserve the legitimacy and authority of the United Nations. For that reason it is essential to achieve the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. In that regard, we call on all members of the Security Council to explore and exhaust all existing political and diplomatic channels within this normative framework so as to secure compliance with Council resolutions by peaceful means. For the sake of the Iraqi people, we have the moral duty to exhaust all opportunities and possibilities provided by resolutions 687 (1991), 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002) in order to achieve a peaceful solution.

Certainly, the Baghdad regime does not deserve another chance. However, the 26 million Iraqis do indeed deserve one. The Iraqi people should not be an innocent victim of the suicidal policies of the dictatorial regime that governs it.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Helg (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Faced with the Iraqi crisis, the international community is now at a crossroads. The Government of Iraq has failed to dispel the suspicion that it still possesses weapons of mass destruction — weapons that it has used in the past both against its own people and in its military operations abroad. By refusing to cooperate with the United Nations, it has inflicted enormous suffering on its own people, in particular its most vulnerable sectors.

On 8 November 2002, the Security Council gave the Iraqi regime a chance to resume its place within the international community. To that end, the Security Council demanded that the Iraqi Government cooperate fully, actively and unconditionally with the inspectors who are responsible for identifying and destroying banned weapons.

The inspectors have worked in an exemplary manner. Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei have reported to the Security Council on several occasions. The facts set out in their conclusions, however, fall short of what we expected. The inspectors have pointed out that they have been granted access to all the sites they wanted to visit without hindrance and that they are making progress with their mission. They have also highlighted the fact that they have found no irrefutable proof that Iraq is continuing to manufacture weapons of mass destruction or that it is preparing to use them. But they have deplored the lack of active cooperation. We had expected the Iraqi Government to respond with a clear sign of good will. Its ambivalent attitude has not restored confidence.

Does that mean that the moment has come to resort to the use of force? We do not believe so. Our position is based on a dispassionate analysis of the situation. We are aware of the dangers inherent in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and we do not underestimate the risk that such weapons might one day fall into the hands of international terrorist networks. We are concerned, however, that a hasty military operation might create a violent shockwave in a region where a sustainable balance based on peace and mutual confidence has not yet been established. Furthermore, we dread the potential consequences of such action for the civilian population.

Rightly concerned about the fate of the civilian population affected by the crisis in Iraq and the surrounding region, Switzerland recently held, in Geneva, a humanitarian meeting to suggest a platform for a humanitarian dialogue, to strengthen the exchange of information in that area and to highlight the humanitarian aspects of the crisis. The meeting was attended by 30 countries, including those neighbouring Iraq, and 20 humanitarian organizations, including all the main humanitarian agencies of the United Nations system, as well as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other humanitarian non-governmental organizations.

The actors involved explained what preparations they had made and what measures they had planned to respond in the event of armed conflict, inter alia. Iraq's neighbours expressed their concerns about the consequences they would face if hostilities broke out, while reminding participants of the overall dimension of the Iraq crisis and the need to share the burden fairly among States, in particular with regard to the question of refugees. The importance of ensuring respect for international humanitarian law, in particular the 1949 Geneva Conventions, was strongly reaffirmed. The discussion also covered the need to make the necessary resources available to humanitarian partners, both for planning and preparatory activities and to deal with immediate needs.

The meeting provided an opportunity to clarify the humanitarian agenda. It was agreed that humanitarian dialogue must be followed up and strengthened through a platform to address humanitarian questions concerning Iraq. If such a group is formed, it will act as a forum for the exchange of views aimed at strengthening existing coordinating mechanisms, rather than at duplicating them. Switzerland has declared its readiness to promote and to support such a group.

During that meeting, the participants agreed that an armed conflict in the region would very probably have grave consequences for the local civilian population, not only in Iraq, where the situation is already precarious, but also in neighbouring countries. Against that background, we reiterate that resorting to force should be considered only after all peaceful means to find a solution to the crisis have been exhausted.

Of course, we understand the argument of those who consider that readiness to use force is essential in order to strengthen the position of the United Nations inspectors. We appreciate that view and the efforts of

those who have expressed it. But the time to make such a decision has not yet come. There is still a chance to achieve the objectives of resolution 1441 (2002) without violence and to contain the danger posed by proscribed weapons in Iraq. We can strengthen the inspection regime. The inspectors have made proposals to this effect, and we advocate giving them the additional means they require to enable them to pursue their task with the necessary efficiency and speed. The Security Council must remain determined and must persevere. If that option fails, we recall that in any case the use of force must be authorized by a Security Council resolution.

Iraq holds the key to the resolution of the crisis. Switzerland appeals to the Iraqi Government to act in the true interests of its country. The international community recognizes Iraq's inalienable right to sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is urgent that the Iraqi Government understand the message of the Security Council and that it respond in the way that is expected of it.

For its part, Switzerland will continue to work in the conviction that a negotiated solution can be found; we remain available to assist in any new effort that could contribute to the cause of peace.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Republic of Korea, on whom I now call.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): In pursuing our common goal of disarming Iraq of its programme of weapons of mass destruction, the international community now stands at a critical juncture. The discussions today and in the days ahead in the Security Council will certainly have far-reaching implications for both the future of the United Nations and the peace and stability of the world.

The Republic of Korea has fully supported, and continues to support, Security Council resolutions on Iraq, including resolution 1441 (2002). That resolution was clear and unequivocal in demanding that Iraq implement all of its international obligations for disarmament under the relevant Council resolutions in a prompt and verifiable manner.

My delegation greatly values the professionalism and effectiveness with which United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have been conducting weapons inspections in Iraq over the past 11 weeks, based on their strengthened mandate under resolution 1441 (2002). We note from Mr. Blix's report last week that although Iraq's cooperation on process, such as granting prompt access to sites, has so far been without problems, its cooperation on substance has not been enough to resolve existing questions of disarmament. It is disturbing to note that many proscribed weapons and other items still remain unaccounted for and that Iraq has been importing large quantities of missile engines for use in a proscribed missile system, in contravention of resolution 687 (1991).

Judging from the findings of the inspection teams as reported by UNMOVIC Executive Chairman Blix and IAEA Director General ElBaradei last Friday, it is clear that Iraq is not yet in full compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002).

Given Iraq's dismal track record of failing to comply with 17 Security Council resolutions over the past 12 years, it is incumbent on Iraq to meet the two key tests of resolution 1441 (2002): a full, accurate and complete declaration; and full, voluntary, unconditional and active cooperation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA. We believe that Iraq knows best what is required if it is to meet those tests. In the event that Iraq fails in those critical tests, it should be responsible for the consequences of such a failure.

We also note from the UNMOVIC Executive Chairman's report that the period of disarmament through inspection could still be short if there is immediate, active and unconditional cooperation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA. We strongly urge Iraq to cooperate fully to ensure complete and verifiable disarmament and thus spare the Iraqi people the untold suffering that will result from non-compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Finally, the Republic of Korea reiterates its commitment to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction constitutes a threat to international peace and security. We hope that the Security Council, as the central organ entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, will act in a unified manner in ensuring immediate compliance by Iraq with its resolutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Djumala (Indonesia): From the briefings by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, it is the impression of my delegation that the current situation — where the world seems perched on the thin edge of war — is not hopeless, and that the objectives of resolution 1441 (2002) can still be met.

According to Mr. Blix's report, more than 400 inspections, covering 300 sites, have already been carried out. They were all carried out without notice to the Iraqis, but still, access was nearly always promptly provided. This is an indication that the Government of Iraq has been cooperative so far, and is a good basis on which to build both expectations and the actual work for the rest of the exercise. It is to be noted that Mr. Blix also said in his briefing on Friday that there had been no convincing evidence so far that the Iraqi side knew in advance that inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) were going to a particular site. The UNMOVIC Executive Chairman observed that the inspectors had not yet found any weapons of mass destruction or related proscribed items or programmes, and that they had only discovered a small number of empty chemical munitions that should have been declared by Iraq.

Similarly, Mr. ElBaradei reported on Friday that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had so far completed a total of 177 inspections, at 125 locations. During the process, Iraq also provided immediate access to all locations. The Agency has found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in the country.

In the view of my delegation, there is nothing in the reports of UNMOVIC and the IAEA to which I have just alluded that concludes that Iraq is, or is not, in violation of resolution 1441 (2002). Both reports, however, are clear that the work of inspections is continuing according to plan, and that those inspections are enjoying cooperation provided by Iraq. At this point, that is as much as can be expected.

It seems quite clear that resolution 1441 (2002) is a finely structured document. It provides a description of the disarmament scenario for Iraq and clearly outlines the consequences of default or violations. Between that scenario and the visiting of those consequences on Iraq, the inspections authorized by the Council have a critical role to play. It is only right that, in formulating the next step, the inspectors and the results of their inspections be taken into account. To authorize war without that condition being fulfilled would amount to preconceived warfare, and would seriously undermine the credibility of the Council.

The problem is possibly with the pace of the inspections. To that end, we share the views of those who feel that strengthening the inspections regime — including hastening the pace of the inspections — must be undertaken as a matter of urgency. What is required, then, is to allocate greater resources of time, manpower and equipment to the inspections, in line with the scenario outlined in resolution 1441 (2002).

In our view, that approach would strengthen United Nations inspections by maintaining the inspections regime on Iraq and enabling more to be achieved quickly, with no dilution in the quality or thoroughness of the work. That would further enhance the credibility of the process and would give all sides confidence that that process is fair and effective.

My delegation acknowledges the cooperation provided so far to United Nations inspectors by the Government of Iraq, and hopes that such cooperation will be extended fully and unwaveringly in order to demonstrate not only that Iraq is complying with the terms of resolution 1441 (2002), but that it also in fact wishes to be seen to be in compliance.

Having said that, my delegation is of the opinion that diplomacy has not been exhausted in this matter and that war is not imminent. We call for the unity of the Security Council on this sensitive matter, as this is the time to close ranks, not break them. Obviously, this is a trying time for the Council, whose authority is at stake on this issue. Its members must work in unity in order to protect that authority. Such cooperation is also imperative so as to enable important decisions regarding this agenda item to be taken within the Council — and at the appropriate time, as it should be. In view of the complexity of the moment, this calls not for the throwing up of hands, but for harder work, wisdom and consultation by the Council in maximizing the use of all diplomatic means with a view to reaching a peaceful and durable solution to this question.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Zainuddin (Malaysia): May I join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of France, for his excellent stewardship of the Council last month.

My delegation also wishes to thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council for convening this open meeting on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, again in response to the request of the Permanent Representative of South Africa in his capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. The decision of the Council to convene this open debate to enable the larger membership of the Organization to express its views — particularly on an issue as important as this — is commendable. We are here today to voice our concerns regarding the possibility that the Security Council is now being asked to consider proposals that open up the prospect of war against a sovereign State Member of the Organization.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made yesterday by South Africa outlining the position of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation also wishes to express its appreciation to the head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Mr. Hans Blix, and the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for their utmost professionalism in the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). We welcome their comprehensive reports to the Security Council on 27 January and 14 February this year. In essence, both recognized that inspections have yielded positive results and emphasized the need for inspectors to continue their work. My delegation favours the continuation of inspections as advocated by most members of the Council and by other speakers in this debate. We fully support the proposal made by France with regard to the need to increase the human and technical capacities of the inspection teams in accordance with resolution 1441 (2002). We also support the intention to request another meeting of the Security Council at the ministerial level, on 14 March, to appraise the situation and the progress made with regard to the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002).

At the same time, the disarmament efforts must be a part of a clear sanctions-lifting plan, so that the debilitating humanitarian crisis in Iraq can be brought to an immediate end. The success of the current exercise requires the fullest cooperation by the Government of Iraq in every respect. My delegation welcomes the recent decision by the Government of Iraq to issue a presidential decree containing prohibitions with regard to the importation and production of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. We also welcome Iraq's recent acceptance of reconnaissance flights by United States U-2, French Mirage and Russian Antonov aircraft to facilitate the work of the inspectors.

Iraq must continue to cooperate with the inspectors and refrain from giving any pretext to warmongers. It is time to bring to a close a sad chapter in the history of the region and forge a new relationship among the regional States based on reconciliation, trust and confidence with one another and a shared common heritage. This, however, could only come about with Iraq's full cooperation in other areas, under the relevant Security Council resolutions, including an immediate accounting for and return of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing third-country nationals, as well as the national archives of that country.

Only these actions on the part of Iraq would ensure the return of normalcy in relations between Iraq and Kuwait. Therefore, we would urge Iraq not to miss this window of opportunity and to do what is right, in the interest of peace and tranquillity for its people, the region and the world.

Malaysia, like many peace-loving nations, strongly opposes the use of force against Iraq, for the following reasons.

First, we are convinced that the Iraqi crisis can be solved through peaceful means. My delegation continues firmly to believe that inspections can work and that all avenues should be explored to find a peaceful solution within the framework of the United Nations. The Security Council must continue to encourage diplomacy to resolve the problem through effective inspections and weapons destruction, as envisaged in resolution 1441 (2002), and not to legitimize war against Iraq to effect regime change. It is our earnest hope that Council members will preserve the integrity of the Council's decision-making process and do their utmost to resolve the problem without recourse to military action.

Secondly, resorting to the use of force is most likely to undermine international peace and security, rather than to maintain or restore it. It would undoubtedly give rise to the potential for an increasing cycle of violence and further aggravate worldwide terrorism, resulting in a more volatile world order. Therefore, it must be avoided at all costs, as it is unjustified and counter-productive.

Thirdly, a war on Iraq would have catastrophic consequences for its population. Bringing the war to Baghdad would inflict more suffering on the Iraqi people, which has already been suffering enormously since the imposition of economic sanctions in 1991. It would have devastating effects on the country's 13 million children, many of whom are already malnourished. Thousands of innocent people and civilians would be killed, and more would be displaced. The price that the Iraqi people would have to pay is unacceptable, especially when clear alternatives to war exist.

Lastly, there is no precedent in international law for the use of force as a preventive measure when there has been no actual or imminent attack by the offending State. Unlike the situation in 1991, there has been no indication by Iraq that it intends to attack another country and no evidence of military preparations for such attack. As may be recalled, the Security Council has never authorized the use of force on the basis of a potential threat of violence. All past authorizations have been in response to actual invasions. An attack against Iraq without any credible evidence provided to the international community of the imminent threat it poses is, therefore, illegal and unjustified. The credibility of this Council as custodian in the maintenance of international peace and security will be at stake if it decides to take the path of destructive war instead of that of constructive diplomacy.

The massive antiwar rallies held over the last few days around the world are clear testimony that the international community does not wish to see or support military action against Iraq. Many believe that there is still an alternative to war, and the use of force could only be a last resort. For the sake of humanity and the lives of innocent Iraqis, war must be avoided. Diplomacy must be given every chance to work. Its success far outweighs anything that military action could bring to bear on the situation.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate that the Security Council, in dealing with the Iraqi crisis and other issues of peace and security, has a vital responsibility to ensure that the international system, based on the corpus of international law and norms, will be preserved and strengthened. It is our fervent hope that members of the Council will take a decision that will serve the larger interests of the international community and not just their narrow national interests. As custodians of the Charter, we are reminded that the United Nations was founded with the explicit determination "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". We trust that the Council, on behalf of the international community, will do what is right to maintain peace in accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The drums of war are getting louder. Threats and warnings have become deafening. The omens of terrifying conflagration and mass destruction are thickening on the horizon. We are standing at the threshold of overwhelming disaster despite all the good intentions and genuine efforts made by peace-loving States and peoples. These States and peoples are seeking a peaceful solution to the Iraqi issue, seeking to dispel the clouds of war and spare Iraq and its brotherly people, as well as the region, this scourge that could have many unpredictable consequences.

We listened very carefully to the reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, and we earlier followed their various statements. These all bolster the possibility of a peaceful solution and stress the need to give the international inspection teams the necessary time to complete their mission and achieve the results that were foreseen in Security Council resolutions, the latest being resolution 1441 (2002).

War is a serious matter. If it solves one problem, it may bring many others, with destructive consequences. Whatever the basic reason for war, the results would be disastrous at all levels — humanitarian, economic, political, legal and moral. The reason for justifying a war against Iraq must be the most consistent reason for preventing war, through increasing and intensifying inspections and continuing political efforts and diplomatic contacts, while

stressing that Iraqi authorities must actively cooperate with the international inspectors. This can be done by demanding that Iraq take measures and provide information for the inspectors to complete their mission, resolve the problem of missing persons and Kuwaiti prisoners, as well as third country nationals detained in Iraq, and return all Kuwaiti property, in accordance with international legality. This should be done so that the Iraqi question can be resolved comprehensively in all its aspects.

The possibility that there are weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is the best reason for the international inspectors to complete their task in order that any such weapons can be destroyed and their use prevented in any military confrontation, which would have grave humanitarian and environmental results

The Security Council today faces a major test in the way it discharges its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security. Since the Council acts on behalf of all United Nations Members, it represents the entire international community. Therefore, the Council cannot take lightly international objections to war on Iraq as long as the possibility exists to achieve the requirements of international legitimacy by peaceful means. It is more important and urgent for the Council to seek peaceful solutions in order to act for international stability. That cannot be accomplished except by maintaining the security, stability and territorial integrity of all countries, including Iraq.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to spare Iraq and the region war and its destructive consequences. We call for a solution to the question of Iraq through the United Nations. The solution must be to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions while maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and avoiding its fragmentation under all circumstances.

Insisting on the open use of force would weaken the credibility of the United Nations. It would create doubts about the fairness and strength of international law. It would send human society back into dangerous chaos at a time when the means of force and destruction are available to all. The use of such force has become possible in the absence of a central authority for the international community and through disrespect for international law.

Even if all means available to implement the resolution are exhausted and the principle of war is accepted, the extent of military action must be limited. Its objective must not be to punish the brotherly people of Iraq, who have suffered for a very long time, through two devastating wars. Only God knows what a third war would lead to.

We support all efforts to destroy weapons of mass destruction, whether in Iraq or in any other State. The call for disarmament of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq must be accompanied by a call to destroy all weapons of mass destruction in Israel, which is the only country in the Middle East to stockpile nuclear and proscribed weapons. It is the only State in the region that refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is the only State in the region that refuses to submit its nuclear installations to international supervision.

Israel's advocates justify that situation, saying that Israel has never used nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. That argument is to be rejected because Israel does in fact carry out mass destruction in the occupied Palestinian territories by killing people, razing homes, destroying the economic infrastructure, imposing a suffocating economic embargo, sabotaging farms, bulldozing fields, uprooting trees, assassinating Palestinian political activists, restricting the freedom of movement of Palestinians by closing checkpoints, expanding settlements and flouting the human rights of the Palestinian people under international humanitarian laws and norms.

Israel has been able to use such excessive force while it holds the most lethal and destructive weapons, thanks to the unlimited assistance which is provided to it and denied to others. Israel does not need to use weapons of mass destruction, but it does threaten the States and peoples of the region with such weapons. The issue is not the kind of weapon used; the issue is the results of a policy of premeditated and programmed destruction aimed at annihilating the Palestinian cause, at sowing despair in the hearts of Palestinians and at intimidating Arabs and Muslims.

It has been said that one of the objectives of the war against Iraq is to fight terrorism. The fight against terrorism cannot ignore terror's main roots in the region: the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands since 1967. Violence and extremism in the region are not a reason to give up the search for a solution to the question of Palestine; it is precisely because this issue has not been resolved justly and fairly, in

accordance with international legitimacy and the principle of land for peace, that the current situation exists.

Double standards are one cause of the extremism and violence in the region. They cause hatred and division among States. Injustice breeds extremism, and oppression leads to explosion. The worst oppression is indignity and the desecration of beliefs and all that is holy. Colonialism is the worst form of injustice. No matter how long and dark the night of injustice is, it will be followed by the dawn of freedom. The sun of freedom will shine; dawn is near.

Peace and security are an indivisible whole. Abiding by international legitimacy is the responsibility of all. No exceptions can be admitted, whatever pretext is used, whatever fait accompli is presented. What we seek and look forward to the principle of "right is might" and not of "might is right".

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): For years now, the Government of Iraq has had a heavy outstanding debt vis-à-vis the international community. That debt must be paid without delay and without concessions. The Council has sent clear signals to Saddam Hussain's regime that the time for patience and tolerance has ended. We are now in another phase. If Iraq wishes to avoid being the object of grave measures of force, it must convincingly prove that it does not possess weapons of mass destruction. Or, if it does, it must destroy them immediately under the direction and supervision of the United Nations.

Uruguay believes that at this juncture and in the current circumstances, before resorting to extreme measures of force, we must travel along all the paths that still remain in order to achieve the objective of disarming Iraq without the bloody cost of war. Above all, it is essential to exhaust all the means and measures that the Security Council has provided for in its numerous resolutions, in particular resolution 1441 (2002), means and measures that, as has been repeatedly stated here, have not yet been sufficiently employed.

Last week, Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei informed us that the inspections, which resumed barely 11 weeks ago, have already yielded positive though not totally satisfactory results. We should continue on this course and give the inspectors more time to complete a task that we knew from the outset would be extremely complex and would require new actions.

We must exhaust all available resources before exposing the world to the most devastating of human experiences: war. It has often been noted in the Council Chamber that Iraq has engaged in deceit and concealment, mocking the rest of the world over a long period of 12 years. That is true. There have been 12 years of tolerance, which can no longer be protracted without justification. But neither can we abandon the excess of tolerance of the past without first awaiting the results of international action now under way. To do so might lead us even against our will to adopt decisions with grave and irreversible consequences. War would undoubtedly cause death and destruction, which is precisely what the international community must prevent in disarming Iraq.

Uruguay, like other States, believes that the inspections should continue and should be decisively strengthened and broadened in order to extricate Iraq from the situation in which it has put itself: a State in breach of United Nations resolutions. However, the prolongation of those procedures should not in any way be interpreted as a definitive renunciation of the use of force or as an increased flexibility in the Council's position. Much less should it be taken as a sign of solidarity with the dictatorial Government of Saddam Hussain. The Government of Iraq should hear this clear and unequivocal message.

When we stress that force should be used as a last resort in an extreme case and in accordance with international law and the principles and rules of the Charter of the United Nations, we are reaffirming our commitment to a peaceful and effective solution to this difficult situation.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Nigeria, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ndekhedehe (Nigeria): Mr. President, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I wish to thank you, and, through you, the other members of the Security Council, for having convened this meeting on Iraq. This meeting, like previous ones, affords Member States the opportunity to express their views on the important issue of finding a peaceful solution to the Iraqi issue.

The issue of the disarmament of Iraq has been on the agenda of the Security Council for about 12 years, since the adoption of resolution 687 (1991). It is the view of the Nigerian delegation that, as protracted as the process appears to be, the Security Council should be commended for the able manner in which it has handled the issue. In its painstaking efforts to find a peaceful solution to the issue of disarming Iraq, the Council came up with a robust inspection regime, encapsulated in resolution 1441 (2002). The collective will of the peace-loving States Members of the United Nations was expressed through the collective wisdom of the Security Council in that unanimously adopted resolution. It is for this reason that the Nigerian delegation has implicit hope in the ability of the Security Council, acting on behalf of the United Nations Member States, to resolve amicably the Iraqi situation and any other situations that may pose a threat to international peace and security.

It will be recalled that the inspection regime in Iraq under resolution 1441 (2002) was established only in November 2002, barely three months ago. Consequently, the weapons inspectors have not been working in Iraq for too long. From all accounts, the inspection teams have done wonderful work within the relatively short period of time available to them. Accordingly, it is the view of the Nigerian delegation that the United Nations inspectors in Iraq should be given time to maximize their efforts and reach the optimum level of achievement of their goal.

It is not in doubt that the robust inspection regime established under resolution 1441 (2002) is aimed expressly and unequivocally at disarming Iraq peacefully of all chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Consequently, we need to exercise patience, and, indeed, to exercise that patience with tenacity, as patience is a key ingredient for peace. In this regard, we need to remind ourselves that the United Nations was established to, among other things, ensure the maintenance of international peace and security — "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". It is therefore imperative that every effort should be made to avoid the use of force. However, where the use of force becomes inescapable in order to enforce resolutions of the Security Council and ensure its credibility, such enforcement action should be the result of the collective will and decisions of the Security Council, under Article 42 of the Charter.

The first preambular paragraph of the Charter of the United Nations opens with the words "We the peoples of the United Nations". This refers unmistakably to the various peoples of the world whose countries are Members of the United Nations. It is clear from the sheer number of the various concerned peoples of the world who took part in peaceful demonstrations before and during the weekend — particularly on Saturday, 15 February 2003 — that the peoples of the world want the Iraqi issue to be resolved peacefully. Accordingly, since the United Nations is the people's parliament, so to speak, the voices of the peoples of the world, which are clearly against the use of force, should be listened to and respected.

Consequently, Nigeria calls on Iraq to comply with its obligations under the various United Nations resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002), and to cooperate with the United Nations inspection teams, so that the issue can be resolved peacefully. This will facilitate the lifting of restrictions, which will bring relief to the Iraqi people, especially women, the elderly and children. Nigeria therefore urges all concerned to make sustained efforts to avoid the use of force while ensuring the effective implementation of resolution 1441 (2002).

In conclusion, it is pertinent to state that, like the menace of international terrorism, the issue of ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction is a global responsibility which can best be resolved collectively under the auspices of the Security Council. Accordingly, while Nigeria, like all other peace-loving nations, acknowledges the urgent need for the eradication of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, we believe that this should be done collectively, in a truly multilateral manner, under the auspices of the Security Council, which has the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Own (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, and to express our thanks and appreciation to you for having convened this important meeting on Iraq.

At this meeting we are discussing an extremely serious issue that poses a threat to peace and security in the Middle East and internationally, through the huge

massing of troops and all kinds of military hardware and the unprecedented preparations that are under way with the goal of waging war against Iraq. Such a war would have dire consequences for the Iraqi population, which has suffered for so long as a result of the sanctions. It would pose a threat not only to the unity, territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Iraq, but also to the entire region, with unforeseeable consequences.

My country strongly opposes any attack against Iraq that has no reason or justification, especially given that Iraq has been cooperating fully with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, as indicated in the briefings of Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei recently, on Friday, 14 February. Those briefings made clear that Iraq is implementing resolution 1441 (2002) and that the inspection process is moving forward satisfactorily. No proof has been shown of the presence or development of weapons of mass destruction since 1991. In response to international demands, Iraq is cooperating seriously and is determined to abandon proscribed weapons, as it emphasized recently by taking a series of measures. For instance, it has enacted effective legislation and formed committees to that effect.

The inspection process must run its full course in order to fulfil its mandate, especially since inspections are proceeding smoothly and effectively. That was made clear by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. ElBaradei here in this Chamber. This is also the wish of the members of the international community, as demonstrated clearly in the discussions that have taken place during Council meetings and by the large number of participants in this debate. The views expressed that war or the threat of it should be averted and all peaceful means supported, and the massive public rallies and demonstrations in many countries of the world, including in the United Kingdom and the United States, by millions of people of various nationalities — all this is proof of the fact that the world favours a peaceful solution to this crisis through international legitimacy.

The haste shown by some Powers to rush to war and use force, with the potential for destruction in the region; to renounce the logic of reason and wisdom that would give a chance to the inspections process to remove weapons of mass destruction peacefully; and to attempt to create flimsy pretexts for war without any concrete evidence, employing intensive information campaigns to justify a war against Iraq: all this raises serious questions in the minds of all prudent and fair-minded people concerning the real invisible agenda behind a war against Iraq and that country's occupation.

This way of dealing with the Iraqi crisis reveals total bias and double standards in addressing issues of the Arab region. While the resolutions adopted by the Security Council concerning Iraq are to be implemented in the light of the repeated charge that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction and that it poses a threat to international peace and security, we see the Council turning a blind eye to its resolutions against Israel. Israel is not subjecting its nuclear facilities or ballistic missiles to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, although it possesses a nuclear weapons arsenal and it refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Even worse, the Security Council has done little with regard to Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the use of the most advanced weaponry, such as aircraft, missiles and tanks, against an unarmed population that lacks even the basic needs of life. Those practices include the random killing of women, children and the elderly, the destruction of homes, the displacement of entire families, collective detention and the continued policy of siege and starvation directed against the Palestinian people. As all of that is happening, the international community remains silent, failing to put an end to these horrendous crimes, which are unprecedented in modern history. At the same time, the Security Council is unable to fulfil its mandate of maintaining international peace and security owing to attempts to hinder the adoption or implementation of resolutions that would end the conflict and would bring about peace and the establishment of a Palestinian State.

The sense of injustice and frustration, the unfair treatment of issues and the double standards, especially with regard to the Middle East and the wider Arab region, will not only lead to more violence and instability there, but will also affect other regions. The world is not what it was yesterday; it has become a small village. Interests have become intertwined, and the crisis will have spillover effects around the world. That requires that we fulfil our responsibilities to our peoples and to history in order to put an end to international crisis flashpoints, particularly the

Palestinian crisis, by enabling the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate rights and to establish a Palestinian State on their national soil, like all other nations, at a time when the crime of occupation has become a stigma for humanity and for those who claim to be civilized.

We hope that the Powers that are beating the drums of war will respond to the calls of their peoples, as demonstrated in massive demonstrations in many of the world's cities, and to the appeals made by the international community in this forum, and that wisdom will be our guide as we deal with the Iraqi crisis, renouncing the policy of using or threatening to use force. The inspections process must be given adequate time, and this issue must be addressed in the context of international legitimacy, through the United Nations and through Security Council resolutions, by beginning the lifting of the sanctions against Iraq, which have lasted for 12 years, and by implementing paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991) to make the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including those of Israel.

Once again, we call for the voice of reason to prevail and for the inspections process to be given enough time to address this issue within the framework of the international community in a way that preserves Iraq's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty and that saves the region and the concerned parties from a war that would claim the lives of many innocent people. All possible avenues for a peaceful resolution of this crisis must be explored.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ecuador, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Yépez Lasso (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador is a peace-loving country that bases its foreign policy on the strictest compliance with the principles and norms of international public law, which are clearly and precisely articulated in the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, my country firmly defends the binding nature of the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the proscription of the use of force in international relations, except in cases envisaged in the San Francisco Charter itself. Ecuador has always supported the Security Council's jurisdiction over the maintenance of international peace and security. All of its resolutions must be respected by the parties, and it is incumbent upon the Council to ensure their full implementation.

Therefore, Ecuador urges the Government of Iraq to cooperate fully in the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). In that context, the United Nations inspectors should continue their work until they complete the process aimed at the peaceful, transparent and verifiable disarmament of Iraq, and should submit the relevant reports for the Council's consideration and for its decision.

The situation concerning Iraq must be addressed in conformity with the norms of international law, primarily those contained in Chapter VII of the Charter. Only the Security Council — when the facts and circumstances so require — will thus be able to determine whether or not there are grounds to use force through an explicit resolution that would set forth the conditions for the use of force, if appropriate.

Ecuador believes in peace and in law. The international legal order established after the Second World War is being tested. My country urges that it remain fully in force and that multilateral cooperation be strengthened in order to build a more secure and just world in greater solidarity.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Thailand, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kasemsarn (Thailand): Three months ago, we welcomed the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) and Iraq's agreement to abide by its international obligations on the basis of that and other relevant Council resolutions. We witnessed with great anticipation the resumption of inspections in Iraq. On 27 January this year, we were pleased to hear the reports given by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei on the progress of the inspections. We noted that their reports underlined the need for more time and information so that the inspectors might accomplish their tasks.

Subsequently, on 5 February, the Council benefited from the presentation by the United States Secretary of State, which helped the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to undertake more focused inspections in fulfilment of their mandates. And, just last Friday, we received yet another report from the two chief

inspectors on the latest progress of inspections in Iraq, where cooperation had been provided in certain areas, but where immediate, active and unconditional cooperation still needed to be forthcoming. In this connection, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation to UNMOVIC and IAEA for their difficult tasks.

The mechanisms put in place by resolution 1441 (2002) and the progress made to date therefore clearly serve to enhance the sanctity and credibility of the multilateral framework and particularly the United Nations system. Thailand thus applauds all the efforts undertaken by all relevant parties to employ effectively the United Nations framework in order to resolve in a peaceful manner this threat to international peace and security. We continue to remain hopeful that the centrality of the United Nations in the search for a peaceful resolution on this issue will continue as events unfold.

Resolution 1441 (2002) provides the framework for the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. We therefore renew our plea to Iraq to immediately and unconditionally provide complete and proactive cooperation to UNMOVIC and IAEA. Iraq must demonstrate to the world that it is faithfully and completely fulfilling its international obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) and other relevant Council resolutions.

Military conflict will have consequences far beyond the region. The inevitable disruptions to the global economy will adversely affect the efforts of many countries to recover from the financial crises and recession, but of equal importance is the impact of the military conflict on the people of Iraq. The Secretary-General's recent initiative to promote discussion with the Security Council on contingency planning to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq in the event of armed conflict correctly brings into focus the devastating humanitarian and economic consequences of war. In any scenario, innocent people in Iraq, particularly women and children, will be among the first to suffer following an outbreak of armed conflict. It is therefore incumbent upon Iraq to be completely forthcoming with regard to immediate, active and unconditional cooperation with the United Nations inspectors in order to avoid even greater suffering and hardship for the Iraqi people.

The steps that the Security Council should decide to take will have an important bearing on the international community's perception of the United Nations and its role in maintaining international peace and security. In this regard, we must bear in mind that the General Assembly has just recently resumed its consideration of a draft resolution on the prevention of armed conflict. As a Member of the United Nations, Thailand will support whatever course of action the Security Council decides to take on this issue. This is our obligation under the United Nations Charter, but we hope that, in deliberating its future course of action, the Security Council will take into account the interests and concerns expressed by the wider United Nations membership and the calls to take the road of peace by pressing forward on peaceful disarmament and resolving all outstanding issues and all threats to international peace and security in a peaceful manner.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Liechtenstein, on whom I now call.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): The solution to the question before the Council today will constitute a defining moment for the United Nations. Since the Council acts, in accordance with the Charter, on behalf of all Member States, such action must be based on a solid knowledge of the views of the membership as a whole. We therefore welcome the continued willingness of the Council to hold an open debate on this issue.

Some three months after the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), there are clearly diverging views on how to proceed with regard to the implementation of that resolution. Nevertheless, there is also broad agreement on several key questions. No matter what the position may be on the desirability or necessity of military action, there is a strong consensus that the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and security is at stake.

It has been said that only military action can make it clear that the Council is willing to enforce, if necessary, the implementation of its resolutions and that inaction will render the Council an irrelevant body and marginal player in the international arena. There is, of course, another way of viewing the credibility of the United Nations, a view which we would advocate. This is an Organization of peace, a body that was created to find peaceful solutions to conflict situations which would otherwise, in the absence of the United Nations,

most likely lead to an armed conflict. This is what makes the essence of the United Nations, and this constitutes the basis of its credibility and thus of its relevance. The United Nations is unique in that it provides legitimacy under international law. This is the standing it must maintain and this is why it must ponder its decisions carefully.

The Charter imposes the obligation on the Council to exhaust all non-violent means of conflict resolution before authorizing the use of force and the Council must live up to this obligation in connection with the present situation. We also recall in this context that all resolutions of the Council, regardless of their status under Chapter VI or Chapter VII of the Charter, are legally binding and that non-implementation in all cases undermines the role of the Organization, especially when it is mainly due to a lack of political will and the absence of political pressure.

The other issue where broad agreement continues to exist is the need for unanimity. The Security Council as a whole has supported resolution 1441 (2002). This was a crucial element in providing the inspections regime under the auspices of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with the essential role it is playing today. Unanimity is therefore also needed for any future action the Council might consider.

The debate we witnessed last Friday made it clear that such unanimity does not exist at this particular moment. We share the view that the use of force would need to be authorized by the Council in a separate resolution. Furthermore, we believe that the reports submitted by UNMOVIC and IAEA do not allow for the conclusion that such a decision is warranted or, indeed, justified at this time. While the decision-making power lies obviously with the Council, its decisions must nevertheless be based on the findings of the inspections regime it has established unanimously.

There is also agreement that UNMOVIC and IAEA are doing a fine job in carrying out the tasks entrusted to them under the terms of resolution 1441 (2002). At this juncture, I would like to express the gratitude of my Government to Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for the highly professional way in which they have shouldered the heavy responsibility given to them. There has been no criticism of the way in which the inspectors carry out their mandate, only criticism of the nature of cooperation extended by Iraq. This criticism, again, is shared in all quarters, while the Council has recently also listened to the reports of improvements in cooperation. The debate is thus sometimes narrowed down to the question of whether or not cooperation by Iraq will ever reach a level that is fully satisfactory for the full implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). However, a question of such magnitude must not be limited to a controversy of beliefs. We should rather ask ourselves whether we can afford not to keep insisting on full and active cooperation through political pressure and the threat of serious consequences, short of armed intervention, in a situation where there is still room for the successful completion of the work of the inspectors.

The Council must not limit itself to the sole question of whether or not it faces a situation of material breach in the terms of resolution 1441 (2002). It also has an obligation, in considering the option of armed intervention, to look at the consequences of such action. Unpredictable as some of them may be, they are certainly immense for the civilian population, for regional stability and for this Organization. We are therefore of the view that an in-depth humanitarian assessment and an outline of the role of this Organization in a possible post-conflict situation must be essential elements in any future deliberations.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kerim (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): As we review the recent developments regarding the situation in Iraq, the Security Council is confronted with an issue that requires effective action that is in full compliance with the principles of the Charter. This issue is not important only for the maintenance of international peace and security, but also for preserving the unity of the Security Council and of the international anti-terrorist coalition. That is why the United Nations and the Security Council must play a crucial role in this crisis. Only a united Council could credibly adopt the appropriate decisions for achieving the objective of the disarmament of the Iraqi regime.

It is very important to note that the debate we are having within the United Nations, in the Security Council and elsewhere, does not mean that we disagree on the purpose of full and unconditional compliance by

Iraq with resolution 1441 (2002), including the provision that Iraq should face serious consequences if continues with violations of its obligations. The latest developments in this regard demonstrate the seriousness of this crisis, which must be approached comprehensively. At the same time, the Security Council must act swiftly and decisively. We pledge our full support to the Council in discharging its responsibility to achieve the objective of the full and effective disarmament of Iraq in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1441 (2002).

In a very short period of time we have been provided with new information and evidence that shed more light on the question of disarmament of the Iraqi regime. The Council had two briefings by the chief inspectors. Although they noted some progress, the prevailing attitude of the Iraqi regime of delaying and obstructing the inspections in substance revealed an intention not to cooperate fully and has given yet another warning about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The Security Council is asking not for progress, but Iraq's full and unconditional compliance with resolution 1441 (2002). In addition, on 5 February, the United States presented compelling evidence to the Security Council, detailing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes, its active efforts to deceive United Nations inspectors and its links to international terrorism.

The position of the Republic of Macedonia in this regard is very clear and transparent. My country understands the dangers posed by tyranny and the special responsibility of democracies to defend our shared values. The international community must stand together to face the threat posed by the nexus of terrorism and dictators with weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussain's regime must not be allowed to posses any weapons of mass destruction, and must disarm completely. We have supported international efforts to achieve the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. However, it has now become clear that Iraq is in material breach of Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002), passed unanimously on 8 November 2002.

Iraq must immediately, actively and fully cooperate with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and comply unconditionally with the requirements of the relevant resolutions. Maintaining pressure on Iraq has proved to be the only mechanism capable of bringing about certain changes in the behaviour of Saddam's regime and respect for the decisions of the Council. While we are fully dedicated to the objective of this crisis being solved through peaceful means — until all such possibilities are exhausted — we firmly believe that the threat of force must be maintained.

The inspection process has produced valuable results to date; its activities might need to be continued, strengthened and expanded in order to carry out resolution 1441 (2002). However, the seriousness of the situation requires immediate and unconditional responses from the Iraqi regime to the inspectors, and time is running out. In other words, the situation requires a change in Iraq's attitude towards disarming, given that it has already been found guilty of material breaches of its obligations concerning 16 previous resolutions stretching back over the past 12 years.

We call upon the Security Council once again to take the necessary and appropriate action in response to Iraq's continuing threat to international peace and security. The Republic of Macedonia will continue its active contribution to the international coalition against terrorism. Saddam Hussain's regime should disarm, as requested by the United Nations, or face the consequences. In that context, my country will support action by the international community against this common danger.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Singapore.

Mr. Tan (Singapore): The world's attention is focused on the issue of Iraq. The development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose a grave threat to international peace and security. The threat of military action against Iraq draws nearer each day, and with it the potential for far-reaching humanitarian consequences.

During Singapore's term on the Security Council, we consistently took the position that the Iraqi authorities must comply with all Security Council resolutions. This is an important point of principle. International law must be observed. We supported the consensus in the Security Council on resolution 1441 (2002) in the hope that international law and order would be preserved. The unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 (2002) by the Security Council sent a clear message to Iraq to comply with its disarmament

obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions or face the consequences. On critical element of those resolutions is the full disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

From the regular update the Security Council has received from the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it is clear that some progress has been made in the inspections, particularly in terms of cooperation on process and procedure. That is a positive sign. But at this stage, it is also clear that "some progress" is not enough. Based on the most recent updates delivered last Friday by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, it has become more urgent and imperative for Iraq to demonstrate without delay that it is complying fully with resolution 1441 (2002) and that it is extending its full and active cooperation to the United Nations weapons inspectors.

We stand at a crossroads on this issue. If the Government of Iraq refuses to meet its disarmament obligations, it will in all likelihood lead to an outcome that we would all prefer to avoid. We therefore urge Iraq to do all that is necessary to fully comply with resolution 1441 (2002), including ridding itself of all its weapons of mass destruction. Otherwise, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his address at the College of William and Mary on 8 February 2003,

> "the Council will have to make [a] grim choice, based on the findings of the inspectors — a choice more complex, and perhaps more fateful, than the one that faced it in 1990. And when that time comes, the Council must face up to its responsibilities". (*Press release SG/SM/8600*)

But also, we must not lose sight of the human dimension of the Iraq issue. Singapore attaches great importance to improving the humanitarian situation of the people of Iraq. They have already suffered greatly over the past decade as a result of the Iraqi Government's non-compliance with Council resolutions, which attracted Security Council sanctions. We urge the Iraqi Government to make the right decision.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Fiji, on whom I now call.

Mr. Yauvoli (Fiji): Fiji fully supports the Security Council's continued leadership on this subject. The issue of Iraq is neither a unilateral nor a bilateral question. Clearly, the effect of a war on Iraq will be felt globally, not only by the parties in conflict. While we commend the preparation by the United Nations of contingency plans in anticipation of war in Iraq, we remain confident that the international community will continue to take the lead and closely monitor the Iraqi situation so as to avert war. In that connection, we must be guided firmly, more by preventive diplomacy and less by a belligerent approach to conflict resolution. On that basis, Fiji pleads in favour of the multilateral approach that the Council is taking in the maintenance of peace and in conflict resolution.

The mandate of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), as set out in resolution 1441 (2002), is largely being adhered to. We welcome the reported procedural cooperation in the Iraq disarmament process over recent weeks. We are pleased in particular that to date the UNMOVIC inspections have found no weapons of mass destruction. Iraq's cooperation with spontaneous on-site inspections at more than 300 sites is very commendable.

Furthermore, Iraq's acceptance of aerial surveillance and of interviews of scientists without witnesses, and its appointment of a second commission to search for relevant documentation, are very positive developments. However, the Commission now needs Iraq's continuing efforts fully to comply with resolution 1441 (2002) and to give the Commission its immediate, unconditional and active cooperation on banned weapons that are unaccounted for, in order to resolve existing unresolved issues of disarmament. Such positive collaboration would avert any inclination to wage war. Iraq's goodwill is therefore indispensable.

History teaches us that in many instances disarmament by force is counterproductive and can lead to militancy. As the case of Iraq shows, the result is an endless spiral of aggression and war. We now have peaceful alternatives, and if we consolidate the necessary political will, the world can avert unknown and unprecedented catastrophe.

We therefore commend the efforts of UNMOVIC, supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Until their efforts are concluded and their conclusions or recommendations evaluated by the Security Council, any engagement in war would be

premature and regrettable. We must try painstakingly to avoid it.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Nicaragua, on whom I now call.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua) (spoke in Spanish): Over the past few weeks, we have been witnessing the vitality of our Organization and of the Security Council, where arduous work has been done for the benefit of the citizens of the world in developing ways to guarantee security for all and to ensure world peace. Our multilateral system continues to offer the only legitimate means of finding solutions to which we are collectively committed; we alone are responsible for our common destiny.

Nicaragua has been following with great concern the situation that has arisen as a result of the lack of proactive Iraqi cooperation in faithfully complying with Security Council resolutions. When a country does not abide by its obligations, it endangers that multilateral system and undermines the good faith that it showed in entering into obligations pursuant to the Charter. We are in favour of multilateral efforts. We would like to see a multilateral system that is capable of exercising a worldwide mandate promptly and effectively. We do not want to see a multilateral system that can be used as a shield against accountability.

In our opinion, resolution 1441 (2002) is clear-cut and specific. It should not now be applied flexibly; nor should it be expanded or interpreted in a new way. We should not delay multilateral acknowledgement of what the inspectors said. Let us make no mistake: the disarmament of Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction is the goal. This is not simply a process of inspectors and inspections; this is a disarmament process.

The inspectors themselves have pointed out Iraq's shortcomings in providing a detailed, exact and complete declaration of its weapons of mass destruction. To date, there has been no clear-cut decision on the part of Iraq to cooperate with the objectives of resolution 1441 (2002) by disarming immediately. After a decade of Security Council resolutions calling for the disarmament of Iraq, concrete, timely and effective measures are required to deal with the threat to international peace and security. Immobility and inaction will undermine trust in our collective resolve and imperil the very credibility of the Organization.

We listened to the reports of Mr. Hans Blix of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency. They both deserve our appreciation for their tireless work and our support for the work that remains to be done. Nicaragua reaffirms the importance of the United Nations as an international institution for the maintenance of peace and security among nations. We believe, however, that the time has come for this Organization to give proof of its ability to respond immediately in the face of Iraq's non-compliance with Council resolutions.

As a peace-loving country, we are concerned about the repercussions and consequences of an immobile multilateral system. If Iraq does not cooperate with the Council, all the means provided for in the Charter should be used in order to guarantee collective security. We cannot allow the situation brought about by Iraq's non-compliance with the Council's resolutions to jeopardize international security.

After December 1998 there was no monitoring, inspection or verification in Iraq, as required by the Council's resolutions. That is why we agree with Mr. Hans Blix that Iraq must present credible proof of the existence, or of the verifiable destruction, of its weapons of mass destruction. It is Iraq that must allay the suspicions of the international community by providing the facts. The inspections cannot continue indefinitely if Baghdad does not provide prompt, active and effective cooperation.

Resolution 1441 (2002) has truly become the last chance for Iraq. Iraq, however, has not cooperated fully with the inspectors and continues to fall seriously short in its obligations. For that reason, we believe that we must continue with the immediate and complete disarmament of Iraq. Current circumstances demand that our Organization take concrete and timely measures. We cannot allow resolutions to continue to accumulate for another decade without any real effect. The multilateral system must justify its existence and demonstrate the firm and unswerving commitment of the peoples of the United Nations to peace and security.

Through omission, we might seriously undermine world peace. We trust that this Organization will not be blamed for inaction.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Albania, on whom I now call.

Mr. Nesho (Albania): The debate about Iraq is taking on broad dimensions. All nations have a historic responsibility to reflect on the position of the international community and to act in the interests of peace and stability in the world. The possession and production of weapons of mass destruction and the danger posed by their potential use in terrorist acts constitute a real threat to the entire international community.

The Albanian Government has attentively followed the latest developments on Iraq and commends the work done by the United Nations inspectors. But to our understanding, their reports clearly show that Iraq is still in breach of the obligations deriving from the Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). That resolution, unanimously adopted, clearly states that Iraq should bring to full and verified completion the disarmament process by ceasing to produce and possess weapons of mass destruction and ending the development of related programmes.

We see that Iraq has to date failed to comply with resolution 1441 (2002), as it has not immediately, actively and unconditionally cooperated with United Nations inspectors. As has often been reiterated in this body, the issue is not whether Iraq has weapons of mass destruction but whether it is cooperating to get rid of them.

The task of inspections in Iraq cannot go on endlessly, because it would weaken the importance of resolution 1441 (2002) and the credibility of the Organization. The international community must be determined to act without wasting time and to send the necessary message of responsibility and determination for the preservation of the international order. Vain promises and empty rhetoric about peace do not prevent crime or secure peace. Recently, we in the Balkans suffered the fatal consequences resulting from the international community's delay in taking the necessary decisions. The mass graves in Srebrenica and Kosovo attest to that sad truth.

In its statement of 5 February 2003, the Vilnius Group of countries, in which Albania participates, stated its concern about the threat of terrorism and of dictatorial regimes that possess weapons of mass destruction, as well as its views regarding democratic values in the world. We appeal to the Security Council to undertake the necessary action in response to the continuous threat that Iraq poses to international peace and security. The Albanian Government understands and supports the commitment of the United States of America and of other nations to avoid the threats of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism.

The determination to prevent terror is a great achievement of the present world civilization. By acting in time and with a long-term vision we will avoid the consequences that might stem from a lack of determination.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The position of principle of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the issue under discussion was accurately and clearly set out in a statement issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan on 6 February 2003. Its main points are as follows.

> "The problem of Iraq, the implementation of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), the activities of the United Nations inspectors in Iraq and the positions of leading States with regard to resolving this question cannot fail to be of concern today to international public opinion and to the international community, including Uzbekistan.
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> "The statement made by United States Secretary of State Colin Powell at the meeting of the Security Council held on 5 February 2003 and the arguments and reasons he cited are, in our view, a sufficient and convincing reaffirmation of the correctness of the United States position aimed at the use of firmer and more substantial measures to exclude any presence in Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and any stocks and technologies for their production in order to save mankind from this horrendous danger."

In the context of today's discussion, the Republic of Uzbekistan also believes it to be fundamentally important to note the following two issues. First, a solution to this question lies not in increasing the number of inspectors, but in a change in Iraq's attitude towards the issue of disarmament. Secondly, the Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities and

take effective action to compel Iraq to implement resolution 1441 (2002).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Capelle (Marshall Islands): It is an honour for me to address this open meeting of the Security Council. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, thereby giving smaller delegations such as my own an opportunity to participate in a debate on this crucial matter.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands, having listened to the various statements made by the Government of the United States to the Security Council in recent weeks, affirms its unity with the United States of America and with its determination to ensure that Iraq provides full cooperation and compliance with its obligations under resolution 1441 (2002).

The Republic of the Marshall Islands takes immense pride in its close relationship with the United States, and continues to benefit greatly from the generosity of that nation. The people of the Marshall Islands have had personal experience with, and thus have first-hand knowledge of, the extreme power and devastating effects of weapons of mass destruction. The devastation of war is evident to all of us. Our sons and daughters now serving in the United States armed forces are at the forefront of our thoughts, as they are among those being placed in peril.

The Marshall Islands joins with others in expressing the strong belief that the best hope for peace and security lies in Iraq's full cooperation with the inspection teams of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency and in full compliance with Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mahendran (Sri Lanka): Sri Lanka would like to join other delegations in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on this issue at the request of the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), the inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and of the International Atomic Energy Agency have submitted two reports — the first on 27 January and the second on 14 February. The inspectors' first report mentioned that Iraq had cooperated with the inspection process but that that cooperation lacked substance. The second report indicated an increased level of cooperation on the part of Iraq, but also indicated that vital questions remained unanswered and that Iraq had not been fully complying with the resolution 1441 (2002). A few days ago Iraq acceded to some of the inspectors' key request, including the interviewing of Iraqi scientists and technicians without the presence of Iraqi officials; allowing reconnaissance flights over Iraqi territory by U-2 aircraft; and the issuance of a presidential decree prohibiting the manufacture or import of weapons of mass destruction. The inspectors' third report to the Security Council is expected on 14 March 2003.

The Government of Sri Lanka fervently hopes that Iraq fully complies in substance as well. We believe that would help to avoid a major catastrophe for Iraq's people and would avert a further escalation of tension in the Middle East region.

Considering the human, political and economic consequences of military intervention, the Government of Sri Lanka calls for intensified and early completion of ongoing United Nations and other diplomatic efforts to ensure a peaceful solution to this question.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I have the honour to convey our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Allow us also to thank you, Mr. President, for having responded to the call by the Non-Aligned Movement for the convening of this important meeting in order to take up the dimensions of the Iraqi issue and its grave potential consequences, not only for the Gulf States, but also for international peace and security as a whole. Nor can I fail on this occasion to express my appreciation to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of France, for his excellent leadership of the Security Council last month.

The United Arab Emirates has very carefully followed all the developments in the implementation of

resolution 1441 (2002) since its adoption approximately three months ago, believes that this is a major turning point in Iraq's implementation of its commitment and obligation to fully disarm its weapons of mass destruction and proscribed weapons, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions. The important and valuable information provided by Mr. Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), and Mr. ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), on 27 January 2003 clearly shows the progress and the extent of cooperation on the part of the Iraqi Government in facilitating the mission of the international inspectors. The international community cannot deny these results, and we consider them a positive and important step towards a just and comprehensive settlement of the issue of weapons of mass destruction disarmament in Iraq.

The United Arab Emirates fully appreciates the major efforts being made by Mr. Blix, Mr. ElBaradei and their fellow inspectors in verifying the various proscribed weapons programmes in Iraq. It welcomes the important steps taken by the Iraqi side in the past few weeks, including the re-evaluation of its stockpiles after the four years following the departure of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) team. Such steps also involve the infrastructure for UNMOVIC offices in Baghdad, Mosul and Al Basrah; unconditional assistance provided to the inspectors, including the opening up of all sensitive sites and official institutions, homes and public and private properties; providing the necessary guarantees for UNMOVIC aircraft; interviews conducted freely with Iraqi scientists; and, ultimately, a presidential decree on the prohibition of the production, importation and stockpiling of all precursors for the manufacture of proscribed chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic weapons. These are unprecedented, positive developments in Iraqi cooperation, and we believe that they ought to be developed and invested in, instead of being aborted through the threat of waging war.

Like all other States in the region and of the entire international community, the United Arab Emirates has continuously called for the full elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in order to avoid all the destructive and grave consequences they could have for the security, stability and development of the region and its peoples.

In light of the current sensitive situation, we believe that a firm foundation of mutual confidence is needed, based on cooperation between Iraq and the international inspectors, in order to expedite their mission. We call on the international community to continue bolstering the capabilities and performance of the inspection regime in Iraq. We call on the international community to give the international inspectors the necessary time to complete their mission with full objectivity and balance in such a way as to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

In this regard, we wish to stress the following needs. First, the responsibility and authority of United Nations institutions — particularly the Security Council, which is responsible for dealing with crises and for building peace and security in the world — must be fully respected. We believe this is the legal and political reference point for the continuing action of the international inspectors, in accordance with resolution 1441 (2002).

Secondly, action must be aimed at lifting the inhuman suffering and sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people, as set out in paragraph 22 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991). All unilateral, non-peaceful options should be set aside. These may lead to a new war with grave consequences — not only for the people of Iraq, but also for the States and peoples of the region. This is a region that has not yet finished dealing with and containing all the consequences of the series of wars we have faced in the last three decades.

Thirdly, the Iraqi Government must be called upon to continue its immediate and full cooperation with the inspection regime for the destruction of all its proscribed weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with resolution 1441 (2002) and all other relevant international resolutions. Such cooperation includes providing all written responses and evidence to the international inspectors in order to fill the gaps and answer all outstanding questions relating to biological, chemical and ballistic programmes.

Fourthly, the Iraqi Government must immediately implement all its other outstanding legal obligations, which are a source of great tension in the region. This should be done in accordance with resolutions of the Security Council, and of the League of Arab States as adopted at the last Beirut summit and relating to the settling of the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners and third-country nationals and the return of Kuwaiti property, in

full respect for the security, sovereignty and independence of the State of Kuwait.

Fifthly, the international community must not apply double standards. Paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) calls for comprehensive implementation — not partial implementation — of all the requirements for a regime to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction, without exception from the Middle East, including Israel, which occupies Palestinian and Arab land and is alone in possession of lethal nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

In conclusion, as we stand at a very dangerous crossroad between war and peace, we look forward to these deliberations in support of the efforts of the international community for a just, comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the Iraq issue. We also stress the need for all relevant parties to show the necessary political will to eliminate the option of a military confrontation and act within international legitimacy in order to save millions of lives and to avoid the economic, social and security consequences of war and to meet the entire world's aspirations for peace and security.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, the representative of Honduras, I would like to discuss a few points of procedure.

First of all, I still have 13 speakers on my list. Not all of them, I understand, are in the Council Chamber right now. We are faced now with the situation where either we could go on and hear the remaining speakers on the list — which might take until 1.30 p.m. if everybody sticks to seven minutes — or we might end up with three or four speakers not having had the opportunity to take the floor. We would then have to reconvene at 3 p.m.

My suggestion is that we try to finish now. This is also a matter of courtesy for the last speakers, because if there are only three or four speakers left for the afternoon session, then most probably they will not get the same audience as they would have here now. So, if the Council agrees, I would propose that we finish now, and I would appeal to all speakers: please stick to the seven minutes as a matter of courtesy to those who come after you.

My second remark is that I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of El Salvador and Zimbabwe in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Lagos Pizzati (El Salvador) and Mr. Muchetwa (Zimbabwe) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Honduras.

Mr. Acosta Bonilla (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like all peoples of the world, the people of Honduras is living through times of extreme disquiet and anxiety due to the world situation and the possible consequences for humankind of the solution that the United Nations decides upon in the conflict with Iraq.

Our people, which wishes to live in peace and harmony with all peoples of the world, is doing its utmost to ensure that a full understanding is reached as soon as possible in the present conflict with Iraq in order to safeguard international peace, human rights and the continued normal functioning of the United Nations, which is the most important organization created by mankind to regulate relations among Governments, peoples and individuals, within a framework of law, justice and mutual respect so as to work in concert to secure the progress and well-being of the human race.

Given those goals, it our wish that the United Nations should attempt by all possible means to ensure that the Government of Iraq destroys or effectively eliminates all deadly weapons of mass destruction and that measures are taken to ensure that Iraq will not possess such weapons in the future. Such an objective requires that the United Nations inspectors receive all possible material and technological support and that they receive cooperation in the form of broad information in pertinent areas both within and outside Iraq so that they can determine with reasonable certainty either that the aggressive threat by Iraq no longer exists and will not arise again or that verification is impossible due to the negative attitude of the Government of Iraq. In the latter unfortunate

scenario, the Security Council would be obliged to adopt the appropriate measures to safeguard humankind from criminal, genocidal acts.

We Hondurans, together with all others who desire that peace in the world not be disturbed, support Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his responsible and forceful stance of ensuring that the Government of Iraq respects the world Organization and that no hasty or unwarranted actions are taken which could plunge the world into chaos. Honduras believes that all countries and Governments of the world agree on peace, on the institution of the United Nations and on the preservation of human rights and of the civilization achieved by humankind, which constitutes a set of values that must always be protected and safeguarded.

The dispute among Governments owing to differing perceptions of the facts, to conflicting criteria adopted by different cultures or to struggle over secondary economic interests must not lead humankind to its destruction.

The Government of Iraq must inescapably accept its obligations towards the rest of the world. It cannot shirk its responsibilities or adopt threatening, belligerent stances towards neighbouring peoples. Conduct of that kind is utterly inadmissible in the twenty-first century, which should be an age of respect for the universal rule of law established by the free consensus of all nations of the world. The United Nations represents that new world legal order. The peaceful settlement of the conflict with Iraq will confirm humankind's progress towards creating on planet Earth a way of life that guarantees to all peoples — weak or powerful, great or small — the right to enjoy a satisfactory material and spiritual existence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mauritius.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): In the interest of time, Mr. President, I am going to skip the courtesies to you and to your predecessor.

My delegation would like to thank the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Mr. Hans Blix, and the General Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for presenting their second periodic reports last Friday. My delegation considers the reports of the inspectors to have been very comprehensive, objective and highly professional. We would like to reiterate our full confidence in Mr. Blix, Mr. ElBaredei and their respective teams of inspectors. We have no doubt that they will continue to do their work with the same dedication and professionalism.

In their reports, both Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei pointed out that they had noted greater cooperation on the part of the Iraqi authorities insofar as process is concerned. However, they still feel that there is a deficit in terms of cooperation on substance. It is extremely important for the Iraqi authorities to understand that resolution 1441 (2002) puts an obligation on Iraq to comply fully with all the requirements of the resolution, leading to the complete and total disarmament of Iraq in the field of weapons of mass destruction.

We welcome the steps taken by the Iraqi Government to allow U-2 surveillance flights, and the conduct of private interviews with scientists, and the reported adoption of national legislation prohibiting proscribed activities. But we note that such measures are being taken on an incremental basis and only under the pressure of severe consequences. It is important for Iraq to understand that it is the will of the international community to see Iraq rid itself of weapons of mass destruction and that it should engage in fuller, more proactive and genuine cooperation with the inspectors, whose job, we agree, should be the verification of Iraqi disarmament rather than the search for weapons of mass destruction.

We have noted that on several occasions Iraq has claimed that it does not possess any weapons of mass destruction. If such is indeed the case, it should provide all the necessary evidence that can convince the international community that it has indeed destroyed whatever amounts of biological and chemical weapons it is known to have possessed.

My delegation looks forward to the next report of the inspectors, which we hope will show that Iraq has displayed greater cooperation on substance and provided the necessary evidence as requested by the international community. Iraq must understand that it is being given a chance to cooperate and to come clean.

My delegation considers that in the unfortunate event that no tangible progress is seen in the next report, the Security Council will have to assume its responsibility and take whatever action is necessary

while maintaining and reinforcing its credibility and centrality, as well as its unity. It is to be recalled that resolution 1441 (2002) was adopted unanimously by the Security Council, thereby reflecting the will of the international community to see Iraq get rid of its weapons of mass destruction.

This is the time for Iraq to choose full compliance with resolution 1441 (2002) and pave the way for the lifting of sanctions. The Iraqi Government must avoid any step that would increase the suffering of its people. At a time when a large number of countries are suffering from abject poverty, malnutrition and lack of development, addressing which requires significant resources, the consequences of war and the ensuing reconstruction will not only aggravate the situation of the Iraqi population but also represent a major setback in addressing global development programmes. We therefore appeal to the Iraqi Government to comply fully and unconditionally with the inspectors and to disclose whatever it failed to disclose in its 12,000-page declaration.

The President: The Permanent Observer of the Holy See being absent, I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): We are meeting at a time of great uncertainty. Many people are concerned. At the same time, the Council has given Iraq one last chance to comply with the demands of the international community.

Time has not run out. The use of force is not unavoidable. We must do everything in our power to achieve a peaceful solution. But for this to happen, it requires the immediate, active and unconditional cooperation of Iraq, as stated in Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).

It is with the greatest concern that we note that Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, in their reports to the Security Council on 27 January and again on 14 February, described Iraqi cooperation on process, but no real breakthrough on substance.

The United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) need urgent answers to their highly important and legitimate questions. What has happened to the weapons of mass destruction that remain unaccounted for?

We should not have to beg for these answers. Iraq is required to provide them. They should have been given a long time ago.

Norway agrees that the inspections should continue. But more inspectors or better equipment cannot by themselves resolve the outstanding issues. We want to recognize the valuable efforts that UNMOVIC and the IAEA are undertaking under difficult conditions. But, as Mr. Blix stated last Friday, the period of disarmament through inspections could be short if Iraq chose to cooperate fully, as required.

It is a challenge to the Council and an affront to the international community at large that Iraq is withholding full cooperation.

The authorities in Baghdad cannot fail to understand that it is in their hands only to demonstrate how present uncertainties can be eliminated and a peaceful outcome ensured.

As a former member of the Security Council that supported the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), Norway wishes to make the following points.

First, any further steps with regard to Iraq must be anchored in the Security Council, as the pre-eminent body responsible for upholding international peace and security.

Secondly, we will see progress only if pressure is upheld. The international community must therefore remain united in its approach to Iraq. Similarly, it is of utmost importance that the members of the Security Council seek a common approach.

Thirdly, and most importantly, Iraq must recognize the full extent of the serious consequences stated in resolution 1441 (2002), while terminating 12 years of disregard for the authority of our world Organization. This would pave the way for the peaceful outcome that we all seek.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Paraguay, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish first to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate of the Security Council. Given the developments stemming from the question of Iraq's compliance with resolution 1441 (2002), it seems to us to be timely and appropriate for the general membership of the United Nations to have the opportunity to express its views on an extremely

serious issue that is of profound concern to the entire international community.

Our participation in this debate is inspired by a constructive spirit, which is only fitting in the case of a founding country of the United Nations that sincerely believes and trusts in the multilateral system, that respects and complies with the norms of international law, and that believes in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Government of Paraguay takes the view that the path of inspections is the right mechanism to guarantee the effective disarmament of Iraq. In this respect, we pay tribute to the work that Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei have been doing, and we are grateful for the detailed reports that they have presented to date concerning the conduct of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections in Iraq.

However, what we have heard in the reports given by the chief inspectors indicates to us that Iraq is continuing to take an ambivalent attitude to the process of inspections. Although progress has been noted that might point to a change in attitude on the part of the Iraq regime with respect to what the international community is demanding, such a change must be immediate and genuine.

The inspection process must continue and be bolstered. The inspectors must have the time that they require to carry out their tasks. However, the inspections cannot continue indefinitely, especially if they are not receiving full cooperation from the Iraqi Government. The seriousness of the situation demands immediate responses, without delay, from the Iraqi regime.

Paraguay feels that the international community's message in the face of the developments relating to this issue is clear-cut and unequivocal. The Government of Iraq must disarm. This is the core of resolution 1441 (2002), adopted by the Council. The Government must comply immediately, unconditionally and fully with its obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) and other relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Likewise, it must step up its cooperation with the UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors, without further delaying tactics, and must provide all the information and documentation required by the inspectors so as to achieve effective implementation of the Council's resolutions.

The resolutions of the Security Council must be implemented in full and without delay. This is the obligation imposed on us by our Charter, which was acceded to by all Member States by virtue of a free and sovereign choice.

The Security Council, an organ to whose member States we have entrusted the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should play an essential role in this crisis. As stated by our Charter, it is the only body that can legitimately authorize the use of force.

For these reasons, we agree with the Secretary-General that the unity of the Council is the foundation for any legitimate and forceful international action. The robustness of a system of collective security such as that of the United Nations hinges on the unity of the Security Council. Only a united Council will be able credibly to take the necessary decisions to achieve the goal of disarming the Iraqi regime.

For all of these reasons, Paraguay reaffirms its full confidence in the ability of the United Nations and the Security Council to resolve international disputes. We join the great majority of the members of the international community in affirming that all necessary efforts should be exhausted to find a peaceful solution to this crisis, reserving the use of force as a last resort. The Government of Iraq will be responsible for the consequences that may ensue. Its resolve will dictate whether the solution is peaceful, as we all desire.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Iceland, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland): Allow me to add the voice of the Government of Iceland to this important debate. The Security Council is now faced with one of its greatest challenges in modern times. Can it cope with its fundamental objective, which is to maintain international peace and security? Hopes are high among States Members of the United Nations. During the past few months the Security Council has demonstrated resolve and unity in addressing the serious threat to international peace deriving from the failure by Iraq to respect its obligations under Article 25 of the Charter to "agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council".

Through resolution 1441 (2002), the Council has unanimously given Iraq an ultimatum and a final opportunity to comply with its demands. They are the

full and effective disarmament of Iraq, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council stretching back to 1991. Baghdad should not be in any doubt concerning what is required of it.

Through its immediate, active and unconditional cooperation, Iraq has the opportunity — and indeed an obligation — to provide for the easing of the grave situation that the international community now faces. There is still time for a peaceful resolution of this crisis, and it is our sincere hope that it can be achieved.

The United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency have our full support, and we commend the able leadership of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei. We do not believe, however, that a strengthened inspection regime will necessarily provide us with the answers so long awaited from the Iraqi authorities. What is lacking is Iraq's demonstration of full cooperation and its provision of all the required information without further delay.

Mr. Blix has stated that "the period of disarmament through inspection could be short if Iraq chooses to cooperate fully, as required by the Security Council". To that end, the inspectors should be given more time. Firm pressure must be maintained.

However, the international community's apparent lack of unity with regard to the ways to proceed has been of some concern. It is of the utmost importance that unanimous decisions by the Security Council be respected and that Member States be prepared to enforce them. The threat of serious consequences, as stipulated in resolution 1441 (2002), must not be compromised. The credibility of the Council and of the United Nations is at stake.

The use of force must always be the last resort for the Security Council. If, however, other measures provided to it by the Charter have proved to be inadequate, the Council must face its responsibility.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Canada, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) (*spoke in French*): The work undertaken by the countries represented around this table today is of perhaps unprecedented importance. History will judge the United Nations and the Security Council on the way in which they will manage the Iraqi crisis. Throughout the world, people are making their voices heard and are demanding a peaceful settlement of this crisis. No one wants a war. But people know Saddam Hussain's record of massive human rights violations only too well, and they know that, equipped with weapons of mass destruction, he represents a great threat to international peace and security in the region.

Since the inspectors withdrew in 1998, we have had no proof that Iraq has rid itself of its weapons of mass destruction. In fact, we have reasons to fear that the opposite is true.

(*spoke in English*)

As the United Nations Special Commission and the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) have both reported, there are still major weapons unaccounted for and essential questions unanswered, especially with regard to chemical and biological weapons and missile systems. That is why the Council unanimously decided, in resolution 1441 (2002), that Iraq should be given one last chance to answer these questions convincingly and to cooperate with the inspectors in disarming itself voluntarily, actively and transparently.

While we may be seeing the beginning of the kind of cooperation that should have been forthcoming years ago, this cooperation remains last-minute, process-oriented and grudging. As chief inspector Blix told the Council on 27 January, Saddam Hussain clearly has not fully accepted his obligation to disarm. Recent cooperation from Baghdad has come only in response to intense international pressure, including the deliberate and useful build-up of United States and United Kingdom military forces in the region.

The job of the inspectors is to verify Iraq's disarmament, not to seek out weapons of mass destruction on their own. More time for inspectors, or even an intensified inspection process — as suggested by some — could be useful, but only if Iraq decides to cooperate fully, actively and transparently, beginning now. The decision is Iraq's to make.

As Mr. Blix said on 14 February, the period for disarmament through inspection could still be short if Iraq were willing to cooperate. Some see merit in making absolutely clear to Iraq what is required. The world simply must have the answers to the as-yet-unanswered questions, especially about the disposition of VX gas, mustard gas, anthrax and botulinum.

In order to spell out clearly to Iraq what is expected of it and within what timelines, we suggest that the Council direct the inspectors to lay out the list of key remaining disarmament tasks immediately and to establish which of those tasks most urgently require evidence of Iraqi compliance. The Council should also establish an early deadline for Iraqi compliance. Such a process would provide the Council with a basis on which to assess Iraqi compliance. More important, it would allow the Security Council and the international community to judge whether Iraq is cooperating on substance and not just on process.

Everyone here understands what disarmament looks like. The case study of South Africa is often cited, because that country took the decision to get out of the business of weapons of mass destruction entirely and did so with determination and transparency and purpose. Iraq can do the same if it so decides.

This crisis is not only about weapons of mass destruction; it is also about people — especially the people of Iraq, who have already suffered under Saddam Hussain through two wars and a decade of sanctions. The humanitarian situation in that country is already grave. Sixty per cent of the population depends on the food distributed under the oil-for-food programme. Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable, and they need protection. For years, Member States have called on humanitarian agencies to get ahead of the curve in anticipation of a possible crisis. Canada therefore applauds the efforts of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to undertake critical contingency planning. It is crucially important that they do so.

The Government of Canada urges all the members of the Council to keep the welfare of the Iraqi people at the heart of their deliberations. As Prime Minister Chrétien stated in Chicago on 13 February, the whole world hopes that Saddam Hussain will act, even at this late hour, by respecting the wishes of the world community. And by complying with successive United Nations resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002), he can ensure that his people are spared further suffering.

The Government and the people of Canada want a peaceful resolution to this crisis, and we believe that a peaceful resolution remains possible. The world asks that the Council spare no effort to try to find common ground. Division would have profound consequences for regional and international peace and security, for the authority of this Council and for the standing of the United Nations itself.

Multilateral institutions are essential to managing our ever more integrated world. The world needs the United Nations to emerge from this crisis strengthened, and not diminished. Iraq is only the latest of what will surely be other threats to our common peace and security, not least from international terrorism. A strengthened United Nations will serve everyone's interests, big and small.

The Government and people of Canada are fully prepared to accept the judgements of the inspectors and the decisions of this Council. Canada will assume its responsibilities accordingly.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Georgia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Adamia (Georgia): I should like to express my delegation's gratitude to you, Sir, for convening this meeting at a very important juncture for the Security Council and the entire international community.

The illegal possession of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and aggressive separatism, often intertwined, pose threats to the very foundations of the international system. In this situation, it is the discharge by the Security Council of its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security that is being put to a highly critical test.

From our tragic experience of ongoing conflicts in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region of Georgia, we have learned many important things. First and foremost, we have come to better appreciate the value of peace; at the same time, we have learned that a high toll is always to be paid when the international community is not in a position to act in concert and resolutely in situations affecting international peace and security.

Peace should always be given a chance and, clearly, this is the substance of the offer extended to Iraq by Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). At the same time, however, we cannot afford inaction as Iraq continues to possess weapons of mass destruction that represent a threat to international peace and security. The Iraqi regime has failed to meet the important requirements of resolution 1441 (2002): full, accurate

and complete declaration and voluntary, unconditional and active cooperation with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Therefore, we would like to associate ourselves with those delegations that have called on the Security Council to meet its responsibilities and to take effective action in order to secure Iraq's immediate compliance. No one should be allowed to breach their obligations under the Security Council's mandatory resolutions, much less when these breaches put international peace and security at stake. Otherwise, the appropriate consequences should be imminent.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Lebanon, on whom I now call.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (spoke in Arabic): The Security Council is meeting at a moment of grave and fateful consequence. The weeks — indeed, the days — to come would seem to be crucial in defining the course of events and determining the fate of peace and security in our Arab region. The security, integrity, pride, dignity and welfare of its people are of paramount importance to us.

The discussions of the Security Council have proven the value of the work undertaken by the United Nations inspectors. The inspectors' reports have provided no evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Therefore, any party of good faith cannot but agree to give the United Nations inspectors adequate time to fulfil their mandate under Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). The completion of that process is the only viable option in conformity with international legitimacy and the imperatives of international law, and stands in stark contrast to the course of war. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of Member States advocate a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

In the past, Iraq has been forthcoming in its response to the demands of the international community for the readmission of United Nations inspectors. The most recent briefings by Mr. ElBaradei and Mr. Blix have revealed clear progress in the inspection process in many spheres, thanks to Iraq's cooperation with the inspectors. Let me cite a few examples, without being exhaustive: the additional documents provided by Iraq on 8 and 9 February; the establishment by Iraq of two commissions entrusted with detecting any prohibited materials and armaments and with providing the papers documenting their disposal; Iraq's acceptance of private interviews with Iraqi scientists and technicians and its provision of additional lists of such personnel; Iraq's acceptance of flights of U-2 surveillance and other aircraft over its territory; and Iraq's enactment of a legislative decree prohibiting the import and manufacture of weapons of mass destruction, pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions.

While we recognize Iraq's cooperation with the international inspectors, we call upon it nonetheless to cooperate proactively and to build mutual trust with them so that they may fulfil their mandate on behalf of the Security Council. There is no doubt that Iraq's ongoing proactive cooperation will ensure, as Mr. ElBaradei has said, the high-level guarantees demanded by the Security Council.

We cannot but note with deep regret the application of unequal standards, especially in regard to the monitoring and disarming of Israel's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, which Israel refuses to subject to any inspections system. We therefore call on the Security Council to ensure the removal of Israeli weapons of mass destruction, which pose a serious threat to the Arab collective security system and international peace and security. Their elimination would be prelude to turning the entire Middle East into a zone free from nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, as set out in Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

In this regard, we were encouraged by Mr. ElBaradei's words in his briefing last Friday to the effect that the existence of an invasive verification system of the International Atomic Energy Agency that would help the Agency to assess the existence or non-existence of a nuclear armament programme in any State would be possible even in the absence of full cooperation on the part of the State concerned.

The Arab summit held in Beirut last March contributed to the restoration of confidence between Iraq and Kuwait. At that summit the Republic of Iraq gave assurances of its commitment to respecting the independence, sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and unity of Kuwait by avoiding any action similar to the events of 1990. Those affirmations were warmly welcomed at the international level and constituted a preliminary step towards Iraq's cooperation in an

expeditious and final settlement of the question of Kuwaiti prisoners and the return of Kuwaiti property, pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The prevention of war against Iraq does not, of course, mean preserving the status quo in the situation between it and Kuwait. Instead, we must be committed to revitalizing the resolutions adopted at the Beirut summit in all their aspects so that a comprehensive solution can be reached between those two States, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity we wish to see preserved, along with the welfare of their people.

The unilateral launching of war against Iraq would represent a departure from United Nations resolutions, a contravention of international legality and an end to the existing world order, which has guaranteed international peace and security since the Second World War. The consequences of a war against Iraq would not be limited to its people and its territorial integrity. Rather, there would be consequences at the political, economic, social and humanitarian levels in all Arab States, which have continued to suffer as a result of wars, because of continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the racist policies pursued by Israel against the Palestinian people.

The dividing line between the option of war and peace is the Charter. The Secretary-General has always reminded us of the need to be guided by the Charter in seeking all resolutions to conflict. In defining its options, the Security Council must be guided by the will of the majority of its Member States, in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter, in order to maintain international peace and security and avoid war and its potential tragic consequences, from which the world could be spared.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Serbia and Montenegro, to whom I call.

Mrs. Nikčević (Serbia and Montenegro): Serbia and Montenegro has been following the crisis over Iraq with great attention and concern, well aware that it threatens international peace and security. The crisis is fraught with serious consequences, not only for the Middle East but for the international order as such.

Iraq must comply fully and unequivocally with all provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 1441 (2002). That resolution, by which the Iraqi regime was given a chance to fulfil its international obligations as mandated by the United Nations, and the return of inspectors are the last and the opportunity that the international community presented to Baghdad to resolve the problem. It is up to the Iraqi regime to take this opportunity and end this crisis by fully cooperating with the international inspectors and disarming, as demanded by the Security Council. Failing to do so, the Iraqi regime will bear all the consequences.

Serbia and Montenegro fully supports resolution 1441 (2002) and the work of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It has followed UNMOVIC and IAEA reports with great attention and is of the opinion that the Security Council should consider them and assess the degree of Iraq's cooperation on a continuous basis.

There is no doubt that every effort must be made to preserve international peace and security, strengthen the process of non-proliferation of arms of mass destruction and secure Iraq's full cooperation with the United Nations. Such full cooperation means that Iraqi authorities must immediately provide unhindered access to all relevant information, documents, locations and persons to the inspectors. Serbia and Montenegro considers that Iraq must without delay disarm comprehensively and verifiably and provide credible evidence that it has done so. That is the road to a peaceful solution of the crisis for which we are all striving.

Great responsibility lies with the Security Council, which under the Charter has the primary role in maintaining international peace and security. This is particularly true of its responsibility to see to it that all its resolutions are implemented and to take appropriate measures if they are not. The Council should therefore continue to be seized of the situation in Iraq and invest every effort within its powers mandated by the Charter to make Iraq comply with resolution 1441 (2002). The authority of the Security Council must not be questioned, and the patience of the international community should not be tested.

Sharing the profound global concern over the crisis in Iraq and convinced that the unity of the international community is very important in the current situation, Serbia and Montenegro pledges its full support to all decisions of the Security Council and

in particular stands ready to contribute to its efforts to implement resolution 1441 (2002).

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Latvia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Jegermanis (Latvia): Latvia has aligned itself with the European Council conclusions of 17 February. However, we still feel it is necessary to express our views on this critical issue.

Latvia would like to thank Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for their reports. We express our appreciation to their inspection teams for the work they are doing in Iraq.

Latvia has repeatedly stressed that Iraq must fully comply with its international obligations and immediately rid itself of its weapons of mass destruction, which present a clear threat to world peace and security.

Over the past 12 years the Security Council has repeatedly demanded Iraq's disarmament in 17 resolutions, which have failed to discourage Iraq from developing its weapons of mass destruction. Resolution 1441 (2002) has offered Iraq the last chance to fulfil its previous commitments and disarm. Iraq still remains in material breach of its commitments under that resolution.

It is the responsibility of Iraq to prove that this disarmament is taking place. The inspectors' task is not to play hide and seek with Iraqi authorities; the inspectors are there to register the disarmament. Latvia urges Iraq to take advantage of this last opportunity presented by resolution 1441 (2002). The responsibility of maintaining peace rests squarely on Iraq's shoulders.

As the European Council conclusions affirm, the united stance of the international community, backed by military force, has slowly moved Iraq in the direction of more cooperation. Both of these elements will continue to be essential tools to resolve the crisis.

Latvia regards the use of force as the last resort. Nevertheless, it is for the Iraqi regime to end this crisis by complying with the demands of the Security Council. This requires an immediate change of attitude on the part of Iraqi authorities. If this is not forthcoming, only Iraq will be responsible for the serious consequences that may follow.

Latvia will stand together with our allies in the international community as it deals effectively with the threat posed by Iraq to world peace and security. The credibility of the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, is at stake here, and Latvia calls upon the Council to take the necessary and appropriate action in response to Iraq's continuing threat to international peace and security. Let us not forget that only Saddam Hussain benefits from discord within the Security Council.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Zimbabwe, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Muchetwa (Zimbabwe): My delegation extends its heartfelt condolences to the people of the Republic of Korea and the United States over the loss of life that occurred a few days ago in their countries.

I want to associate my delegation with the official position adopted by the African Union that unilateral military action against Iraq would adversely affect Africa's stability and development.

During the last few weeks, this Council has witnessed an assault on the principle of multilateralism by a determined and impatient ad hoc coalition, which believes that might is right. The role and importance of the United Nations cannot be overemphasized in the settlement of disputes and the preservation of peace and security. Indeed, even former United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, a Republican by political persuasion, agrees that:

> "There is no dispute that the vast range of UN activities are indispensable. There is no place for meetings with people where otherwise the fact of the meeting might be controversial than the annual sessions of the General Assembly. There are many occasions when a negotiation has been completed, where the mechanism which the United Nations provides for observing compliance with the agreement would be very difficult to replace if not impossible to replace."

The United Nations setting and its emphasis on cooperation resonate with former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott's assertion that:

> "in a fashion and to an extent that is unique in the history of great Powers, the United States defines its strength — indeed its very greatness — not in terms of its ability to achieve or maintain dominance over others, but in terms of its ability to work with others in the interest of the international community as a whole. American

foreign policy is consciously intended to advance universal values".

Those pronouncements by Henry Kissinger and Strobe Talbott are not the ramblings of two old men showing off at a public speaking contest. Rather, those statements by renowned United States public servants capture the essence of multilateralism. I retrieved them from the annals of history to quicken our memory lest we forget.

Germany has reminded us that the sanctions regime imposed to encourage Iraq's compliance with its disarmament obligations has been more effective in ridding Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction than the Gulf war itself. Let me add that the sanctions regime was made possible because of cooperation. It is true that a Member State can engage in individual and collective measures of self-defence even without the United Nations but, as is shown by the Iraq case, Security Council authority has assisted United States policy by adding the teeth of economic sanctions, extending a broad political umbrella and authorizing on-site monitoring on foreign-State territory.

The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. ElBaradei, speaking on 14 February 2003, submitted to the Council that the Agency could carry out its mandate without Iraqi cooperation. That should put to rest the concerns of those who want us to believe otherwise.

While my delegation is not suggesting that Iraq should not cooperate with the inspectors, we must give serious consideration to the Arab proverb that we heard from the Iraqi Permanent Representative in the Council Chamber last week that "an empty hand has nothing to give" (*S/PV.4707, p. 31*). Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei have informed us that they have found no evidence to suggest that Iraq has reactivated its weapons of mass destruction programme, and we must abide by their findings.

It is the bounden duty of the Security Council to support the inspectors — whose mandate, by the way, is not to find fault but to verify Iraq's disarmament.

Observations by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and the IAEA that they have not found Iraq in material breach of resolution 1441 (2002) and that Baghdad is proactively supporting the inspectors by encouraging its scientists to accept private interviews with the inspectors and by allowing reconnaissance flights are welcome and should be encouraged.

I was present in the Security Council last Friday and heard the thunderous applause that punctuated France's statement. I would like to take this opportunity to identify my delegation with the leadership France has assumed in guiding the Security Council back to its core business of providing global peace and security. The French proposals and the offers made by other members of the Council to assist in the disarmament process of Iraq are a milestone in that process.

Let us remember that resolution 1441 (2002) deals with the disarmament of Iraq and has nothing to do with regime change. Resolution 1441 (2002) remains a beacon of hope and the only legitimate road map for verifying Iraq's disarmament.

The President: The next speaker is the Permanent Observer of the Holy See, on whom I now call.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to express the Holy See's deep concern about the Iraqi issue in the Security Council Chamber, where issues related to international peace and security are debated in order to save the world from the scourge of war. I am pleased to recall on this occasion the successful meeting of Secretary-General Kofi Annan with His Holiness Pope John Paul II yesterday evening at the Vatican.

Since the very beginning, the Holy See has always recognized the international community's irreplaceable role in resolving the issue of Iraq's compliance with the provisions of United Nations resolutions.

In this regard, the Holy See realizes that the international community is rightly worried and that it is addressing a just and urgent cause: the disarmament of arsenals of mass destruction — a threat surfacing not just in a single region but, unfortunately in other parts of our world. The Holy See is convinced that we must make efforts to draw strength from the wealth of peaceful tools provided by international law; to resort to force would not be just. To the grave consequences for a civilian population that has already been tested long enough are being added the dark prospect of tension and conflict between peoples and cultures and

the regrettable reintroduction of war as a way to resolve untenable situations.

The Holy See is closely following developments on the ground and expresses its support for the efforts of the international community to resolve the crisis within the sphere of international legality. For this purpose and with this mind, His Holiness Pope John Paul II recently sent to Baghdad a special envoy, who met with President Saddam Hussain and delivered a message from the Pope stressing, inter alia, the need for concrete commitments in faithful adherence to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. A similar message has also been conveyed to Mr. Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, who visited the Pope on 14 February. Moreover, in view of the devastating aftermath of a possible military intervention, the special envoy of the Pope made an appeal to the conscience of all those who have a role to play in determining the future of the crisis in the coming days because, in the end, it is conscience that will have the last word, as it is stronger than all strategies, all ideologies and all religions.

The Holy See is convinced that even though the process of inspections appears somewhat slow, it remains an effective path that could lead to the building of a consensus, which, if widely shared by nations, would make it almost impossible for any Government to act otherwise without risking international isolation. The Holy See is therefore of the view that it is also the proper path to an agreed and honourable resolution of the problem, which, in turn, could provide the basis for a real and lasting peace.

War is never just another means that one can choose to employ for settling differences between nations. As the Charter of the United Nations and international law itself remind us, war cannot be decided upon, even when it is a matter of ensuring the common good, except as the very last option, in accordance with very strict conditions and without ignoring the consequences for the civilian population both during and after military operations.

On the issue of Iraq, the vast majority of the international community is calling for a diplomatic resolution of the dispute and for exploring all avenues towards a peaceful settlement. That call should not be ignored. The Holy See encourages the parties concerned to keep open the dialogue that could bring about solutions in preventing a possible war, and urges the international community to assume its responsibility in dealing with any failings by Iraq.

Before I conclude my statement, allow me to echo, in this Chamber of peace, the hope-inspiring words of John Paul II's special envoy to Iraq: "Peace is still possible in Iraq and for Iraq. The smallest step over the next few days is worth a great leap towards peace".

The President: The representative of Iraq has asked for the floor to make a brief statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (spoke in Arabic): Allow me, through you, Mr. President, to express our gratitude to all those delegations — that is to say, the vast majority of delegations — that have expressed their concern over the Iraqi crisis and that have advocated peace and opposition to war. In advocating peace they are emphasizing the fact that they value the noble principles upon which the Organization and the Security Council were founded: saving the world from the scourge of war and maintaining international peace and security through peaceful means.

At the same time, I also understand the positions of States that sided with the extreme stance of the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Their reasons for doing so are known to us and to them. I would merely like to call upon them to consider this issue carefully and to avoid taking hasty decisions in the future. Issues of war and peace imply a grave moral and historical responsibility. Careful consideration entails understanding what Iraq is doing and what the international inspectors are doing. Simultaneously, it also means accurately ascertaining the true position of the United States and the United Kingdom.

But, what I fail to understand is the kind of language employed by some speakers — truly debased language that is not customarily heard in the Council, which I shall not go into in any detail. Nevertheless, allow me to point out the following.

First of all, there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Secondly, Iraq will continue to cooperate constructively and productively with the inspections and will make every necessary effort in that regard. Let me also reassure those who have called on Iraq to cooperate that Iraq is determined to do so, both on substance and on process, in order to cut off at the

knees any allegation to the effect that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction.

Let me also say that there are no real, serious problems in our relations with the inspectors. However, there are outstanding issues concerning disarmament. What is required of Iraq is not that it hand over weapons of mass destruction. Iraq is to hand over documents and other evidence attesting to its being free of weapons of mass destruction. In fact, that is what Iraq is doing. We are confident that no one will find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, because there are none. Yet, some wish to exploit these disarmament issues. I call upon those who have stood side by side with the United States and have supported the use of military force to consider and examine the reports of the United Nations so as to ascertain what the outstanding issues are. They do not relate to weapons of mass destruction; they relate to evidence and documents. That is precisely what Iraq is working to provide. We are doing our utmost in that regard.

Iraq has therefore permitted everything that has been described by the great majority of those who have spoken here on behalf of the international community. Iraq has opened every door and has allowed everything it possibly can allow. The inspectors have merely to carry out their work in a targeted and objective manner, away from the pressures that are being brought to bear upon them through the media and directly the United States and the United Kingdom.

The President: There are no further speakers remaining on my list. We have thus concluded the present stage of our consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4709 (Resumption 1)/Corr.1

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

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Corrigendum

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For **Archbishop Martino** (Holy See) *read* **Archbishop Migliore** (Holy See)

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